

**FROM TRIBALISM TO INDEPENDENT STATE: REFLECTION  
ON THE EMERGENCE OF KAMATA-KOCH KINGDOM  
(C 15<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.-1773 A.D.)**

**Thesis submitted to the University of North Bengal, Darjeeling, India, for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.**

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# Declaration

The present Ph.D. Dissertation entitled *From Tribalism to Independent State: Reflection on the Emergence of Kamata-Koch Kingdom (C15th Century A.D.-1773 A.D.)* submitted by me for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History from the University of North Bengal, is entirely based on original materials carried out under the supervision of Dr. I. Sarkar, Reader, Department of History, University of North Bengal; and that neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted in any academic institution for such degree or diploma for me.

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# Acknowledgement

It was my native village (Chhoto Chowkir Bos), situated in the Western Duars where I was brought up with several tribal communities and had the privilege to keenly observe the cultural similarities among the Mech, Rabha and the Koch (Rajbanshis) people. In my Post Graduate study I got more interest about the culture of these tribes when I again had an opportunity to be acquainted with other Mongoloid communities of Northeast India, Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal. Under such a background, it may be noted, an idea to explore the issues of socio-cultural change of the tribal communities developed and the present work is an outcome of it. I am grateful to Dr. I. Sarkar, Reader, Department of History, University of North Bengal who always encouraged me and supervised the present work in the style as it has been shaped in its present form.

The idea of communal unity among the tribes in certain stages together with their socioeconomic changes are the essential pre-conditions for the formation of a political structure of a community. Again process of cultural changes, state formation and the changes in the mode of production are interrelated in terms of development of the community. This relationship and its comparison with tribal and non-tribal state formation process of pre-colonial India and elsewhere are the main focus of the present work.

It is a fact that a research work of this nature can not be completed by a single individual and this is true in my case of research work. I enjoyed enomours help and cooperation from different corners and without which I might not have completed this work in due time. At the outset I must aknowledge the co-operation of Prof. Kunal Chattopadhyay, Prof. Himadri Banerjee, Dr. Rila Mukherjee, Prof. Sukla Das, Prof. Chittabrata Palit, other colleagues of the Department of History, Jadavpur University, who clarified many points to understand the process of state formation. In this respect I must record the help I got from the articles and observations published by the North East India History Association. A few of them are not only releavent but also have widened my vision as to the theme of research. I would also record here the inspirations of the teachers of the department of history, University of North Bengal, who some way or other inspired me for the study of this region in particular and I have no hasitation to record that such a congenial situation prompted me to explore the history of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley.

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Sri Sankar Kumar Bose of Kolkata all along encouraged me for this study and with a scholar like temperament allowed me to consult rare coins (*Narayani Tanka* of the Koch kings) of his collection. Prof. A.N. Basu, the present Vice Chancellor of Jadavpur University, has always been a source of moral support for the work. I am indebted to him. Last but not the least, I am grateful to my students of the Department of History, Jadavpur University, for their active interactions with my present studies and research. And for any error in the work, I am alone responsible.

**Rup Kumar Barman**

## Abbreviations

<b>DHAS</b>	=	Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Guwahati, Assam.
<b>IESHR</b>	=	Indian Economic and Social History Review.
<b>EPW</b>	=	Economic and Political Weekly.
<b>IHR</b>	=	Indian Historical Review.
<b>JAS</b>	=	Journal of Asian Studies.
<b>JASB</b>	=	Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal.
<b>JBORS</b>	=	Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society.
<b>JNEICSSR</b>	=	Journal of North East India Council for Social Science Research.
<b>JESHO</b>	=	Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient
<b>JPS</b>	=	Journal of Peasant Studies.
<b>MAS</b>	=	Modern Asian Studies.
<b>Ms./ms.</b>	=	Manuscript.
<b>NBSL</b>	=	North Bengal State Library, Cooch Behar.
<b>Skt.</b>	=	Sanskrit.

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## Introduction

Studies on pre-colonial Indian states although considerably enriched the theoretical framework of sociopolitical development of the Indian civilization, Northeast Indian tribal state formations and the process of transition from tribalism to state are still virgin area of historical inquiry. Rise of few tribal chiefdoms in the 13<sup>th</sup> century Northeast India and their transition to state-system by the 16<sup>th</sup> century thus deserve a careful and critical historical investigation to understand the process of historical development in the region. Certain tribes such as--Koch, Ahom, Meitei, Jayantia, Kachari, Tripura and Chutia had established their states in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by materializing some identical long-term dynamics of sociopolitical transformation. Here, an intensive study has been undertaken about a small but viable state emerged in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century under the leadership of the Koch tribe in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley i.e. North Bengal and Lower Assam. The beginning and development of the Koch kingdom in various stages have some identical points with the history of some other states of India or elsewhere but fact remains that there are certain peculiar and exceptional issues which provoke academic investigation in order to conceptualize the process of state formation of the region as a whole. The relevance of this study, in fact lies in such a background.

A careful and critical study of the historical sources on the Koch kingdom shows that prior to their emergence as ruling power, Koch and Mech tribes had their tribal societal format, controlled by a pastoral and non-plough (*jhuming*) agrarian economy in the hills and foothills of present Western Assam and Sub-Himalayan Bengal. They had their long political experience as 'ruled' under the states flourished in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. But decline of the Kamata state by the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century had transformed the Tista-Brahmaputra valley into a sphere of incessant inter-tribal feuds and conflicts among the decentralized political units. In such a political background, the village-confederacy of the Koch and Mech tribes began to transform to chiefdom under the leadership of Haria Mech (*Mandal*)<sup>1</sup>. The chiefdom eventually transformed to a kingdom due to the successful leadership of Visu (son of Haria Mandal) in the

aggressive warfare and territorial formation .The transitional process reached to its climax in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century when Nara Narayan (1540-87 A.D.) had successfully materialized other pre-requisites of state formations. Although the kingdom was divided in 1581 for internal conflict but it survived as an independent state till 1772 A.D. with continuous modification of state-structure. Since the 1773 A.D. to the independence of India (1947 AD) it enjoyed the 'Native State' status and finally merged with independent India in 1949.<sup>2</sup>

There were few causative factors that stimulated the emergence of the Koch state, its economic viability, formation of its structure, centralization of power and its legitimating aspect. 'Warfare' was the primary causative of territorial formation and the transformation of the tribal chiefdom to a state. Plundering of booty through aggressive warfare had encouraged the tribes for further warfare and formation of militia. Their aggressive warfare, however, was replaced by defensive warfare since the early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Regularization of the income of the state was another aspect of their state formation that had been materialized by the Koches by two steps. First step was the collection of land revenue from the peasantized agricultural economy of the plains of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley by recruiting revenue collecting agencies and officials. Second step was the peasantization of the tribals for further surplus generation to be appropriated by the state. The non-plough tribal agricultural operations particularly 'shifting agriculture' (*jhum*) began to be replaced by the plough and wet rice cultivation and the tribals were brought closer to the non-tribal subjects in the domain of political relations.

Question of managerial functions of the state led to the development of elaborate bureaucracy in the state with new offices. Power centrality was the basic trend in such offices. The kingship became hereditary with a divine connection. The post of military generals, civil administrators including certain other subsidiary offices were entrusted to the fellow tribal village chiefs and kin of the ruler. Their post gradually become hereditary and the ruling power were basically concentrated to the founder tribes.

Concentration of political power into a small segment of the tribes both in internal (vertical) and external (horizontal) domains had been legitimized by its ultimate adoption of exogenous (non-tribal) cultural ideologies. Being *hinduized* (like

contemporary other Northeast Indian states) the Koch kings assumed high-sounding Hindu titles and attempted to diffuse the new ideologies which eventually enforced the detribalization of the tribals. At the same time, redistribution of concentrated surplus through the building of universally beneficial institutions had fulfilled the internal legitimization aspect of the tribal state. Military expeditions, organized defence and matrimonial relations had materialized external legitimacy of the kingdom.

So emergence of the Koch state 'from the autonomous tribal villages' in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century and its maintenance of sovereign status till 1772 A.D. went through two broad stages of sociopolitical developments viz. - 'from clan village to chiefdom' and 'from chiefdom to kingdom'. The dynamics of sociopolitical changes were guided by the 'economic controlling of culture'. Power centrality led to the growth of state-structure that was legitimized by the 'adopted culture'. In spite of theoretical nearness with the origins of early states, tangential similarities with the Northeast Indian tribal states and structural resemblance with traditional concept of ancient and pre-colonial Indian states; emergence of the Koch kingdom was the result of historical development. Territorial segmentation of the kingdom and the presence of feudal characters, however, did not transform it into a segmentary state nor to a feudal state system. It is the basic objective of present study to locate the process of emergence of the kingdom with basic requirements of a state. Moreover, cultural change in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley and its correlation with the state formation process of the Koches are still virgin area of historical inquiry. All these aspects suggest a background of the present work.

For the purpose of this work, archeological evidences including inscriptions, temples, archeological remains and explorations in North Bengal and Northeast India; coins of the Koch kings (*Narayani Tanka*) and literary sources have been utilized. The literatures produced under the patronage of the Koch and Ahom kings such as *charitas*,<sup>3</sup> *vamsavalis* (genealogies)<sup>4</sup>, *buranjis* (chronicles), translations of the classical literatures and scholarly works of contemporary social reformers have been carefully consulted as primary sources. There are few Persian works containing ample information about the Kamata-Koch and Ahom state. Scholarly English translations of these works<sup>5</sup> have been utilized with great care. Foreign traveler's accounts<sup>6</sup> and early colonial reports and survey on Cooch Behar, Assam and Bhutan<sup>7</sup> have left some

impression about the socioeconomic format of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley which are complementary sources of information. Diplomatic letters exchanged among the Northeast Indian states, between the East India Company and Cooch Behar State and Bhutan and the East India Company<sup>8</sup> have fattened the amount of literary sources. Additional data about the tribalism, tribal culture including mode of production of the tribals of the present study have been collected through the field works carried out in tribal villages of North Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya. Myths of origin of the kingship of the Kamata-Koches and building of temples have also been collected through the fieldwork.

On the basis of source materials mentioned above and the approach of the research work stated there in, the whole work has been presented within the following chapters. The introduction of the dissertation is intends to present an overview of the whole work under consideration. Formation of early and secondary states in theoretical perspective has been analysed in the chapter I. Basic features of state formation in ancient and medieval India and in the Northeast India also have been highlighted in this chapter.

Careful studies and examination of the sources of history of the Koches, Meches and other tribes of the region have raised several questions. Whether the Koch and Mech tribes had a tribal economy or way of life prior to their emergence as a state? This question along with the societal format, geographical location of the present study and identity of the Koches has been discussed in the chapter II.

The early history and origin and growth of the state system in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley prior to the rise of the Koch power are the main theme of the chapter III. Rise and fall of the Kamata kingdom under the Khenas in the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D., post-Khena situation in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley and beginning of political formation of the Koches have also been constructed in the chapter III.

Transitions of the Koch chiefdom to a kingdom, territorial formation and consolidation of the state have been analyzed in the chapter IV. Division of the kingdom, internal conflicts, loss of conquered territories to the neighbouring aggressive powers, continuity of the core area as an independent state till 1772 A.D. and role of warfare also have been highlighted in this chapter.

Economic viability of the Koch state and its correlations with the surplus generation and its concentration, technological acculturation of the tribes, process of peasantization and role of *Narayani Tanka* are major queries made in the chapter V.

Institutionalization of leadership, centralization of political power and development of administrative structure have been analyzed in the chapter VI. This chapter also highlighted the process of bureaucratization and evolutions of the administrative machinery of the Koch state.

Correlation between the political legitimacy and process of cultural change is the basic theme conceptualized in the chapter VII. Role of the state in detribalization of the tribal society, adoption and diffusion of exogenous culture and their symbiotic relations with the state formation process have been analyzed in this chapter. Marriage relations of the Koch kings (ruling section) have been analyzed with a new view of external legitimacy of sociopolitical power.

Last chapter is the observation on the process of Koch state formation in the form of conclusion derived from the analysis of the previous chapters.

### Notes and References

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## **Chapter I**

### **State Formation: A Theoretical Overview**

The process of state formation as a subject of historical research is not a new one. Anthropologists and historians have propounded certain concepts about the transition of political society from tribalism to a state system and identified certain causative factors in the process of emergence of early states. These causatives are equally important to conceptualize the process of origins of the early Indian states. On the other hand, the medieval Indian state formation is more interesting area of historical inquiry both among the Indian and non-Indian scholars than the early Indian states. But emergences of tribal states in the peripheral regions of India in pre-colonial period are theoretically different from the states of central zones. However, careful historical studies on pre-colonial Northeast India have identified few causative factors in the process of tribal state formation.

#### **1.1. Early State Formation: An Anthropological Approach.**

Macro and micro level anthropological studies on the transition of tribalism in multidimensional perspectives have conceptualized this transition either as a 'political evolution' <sup>1</sup> or as a 'processual development'. The evolution was 'linear' and has been observed as a 'transition from bands to tribe' and from 'chiefdom to state' <sup>2</sup> but the preconditions and causatives of transformation were not mono-causal. To Morton H. Fried, it was an evolution of political society 'from egalitarianism to state through the rank and stratified society'. <sup>3</sup> But E.R. Service identified the process as the transition of band society to tribe and from tribe to state through the chiefdom. <sup>4</sup> These stages of evolution in reality, however, always was not lineal and did not exist equally.

The cultural anthropologists have identified certain causatives for the societal change and origin of the state from a stateless stage. 'Warfare' has been viewed as an important causative that had a decisive role in the making of a state. <sup>5</sup> But 'warfare' always was not a prime mover for political evolution although it reinforces the cohesiveness of centralization of authority of the emerging state and it acts as the mechanism of state formation. <sup>6</sup>

To R.L.Carneiro warfare was the 'mechanism' that accelerated the process of political evolution 'from autonomous village to the state'. He argued that state formation goes through certain stages in certain conditions. State arises where the availability of agricultural land was restricted and to acquire circumscribed agricultural land caused the war among the autonomous villages. Aggregation of villages by a chief had transformed the villages into a greater political identity and formed the chiefdom. Conquest of chiefdom by another had increased the size of the political units while the number of chiefdom was decreased and eventually unified under the banner of a strong chief who centralized the political power and led to the formation of a state. The individual war heroes then occupied newly formed political offices to decree and enforce laws, collect taxes, organize labour and draft men for war. Second step was the concentration of resource where availability of food was restricted and exploitable area became occupied and competition over cultivable land was increased and warfare became the means of resource concentration. It further accelerated the political integration beyond the village level. Finally, Carneiro argues that social circumscription or population pressure in the central area of the territory pressurized over the land that led the crystallization of larger political units and formation of states.<sup>7</sup>

In case of the secondary states also 'war and state making goes together'. In the European context, Charles Tilly argued that 'internal warfare' made by the local chiefs to establish him as a dominant figure with substantial territory and extraction of the means of war such as --men, arms, food, lodging, transportation etc; had a significant role in the formation of states. Successful extraction activities led to the making of state. As a by product, it created organization in the form of a tax collection agencies, police forces, courts, exchequers, account keeper; then it again led to state making. Again expansion of military organizations as standing army, war industries, supporting bureaucracies, were grew up as a state making process. In the state making process, the managers of states formed alliances with specific social classes. The member of those classes loaned resources and provided technical service or helped to ensure the compliance of the rest of population.<sup>8</sup>

Stratification has been viewed as an essential precondition for the emergence of a state because of stratified group's involvement in 'intra-group' and 'inter-groups'

conflicts<sup>9</sup> and 'elite formation' for socio-political control of the society. On the other hand 'technology' has been visualized as a major variable of state formation<sup>10</sup>. 'Control over irrigation and its management by the managerial groups in pre-industrial agricultural societies' has been identified by Karl Wittfogel as a major causative of early state formation.<sup>11</sup> Apart from managerial function, those who had access to good agricultural land accumulated power.<sup>12</sup> Irrigation although strengthens the centralization of authority, it was neither a necessary nor a sufficient cause of state's emergence.<sup>13</sup> Growth of urban centers and trade, at the same time precipitated the social differentiations and accelerated the growth of social-stratification;<sup>14</sup> an essential prerequisite for state formation.

Formation of managerial groups in the society was another aspect of early state formation. Elman R. Service argues that the government of the state had been originated through the institutionalization of centralized leadership. In the egalitarian societies (bands and tribes) leadership was not permanent but transmitting and accepted because of an individual's charismatic qualities, his role as sensible leader of the society, integrator and mediator in disputes and peacekeeper. Leadership became a regular activity when it became linked with the acquiring and redistribution of commodities. The chiefdom emerged when the office of the leaders came to be regularly filled, typically by inheritance.<sup>15</sup> In the chiefdom, leader's personal power was institutionalized to form a hierarchy of subsidiary offices. The hierarchical authority reduced the kinship structure and this stage was an intermediary to the rise of state from a band society.<sup>16</sup> However, Elman R. Service denies or recognizes minimum role of other forces like warfare, population growth and urbanization in the formation of a state.<sup>17</sup>

The Marxists promulgate the theory that the material condition and the mode of production of a society are essential precondition in transforming its political structure and social behavior in a particular ecological environment. Lewis H. Morgan<sup>18</sup> described the probable stages of social evolution and the characteristics of primitive society which was basically 'communistic', lacking commerce and entrepreneurs, private property, classes of rich and poor and a despotic ruler. In fact, a tribal council without a strong leader used to make decision in those societies. The increased production brought about by a technological improvements eventually led to the

generation of surplus and its arbitrary appropriation by a small segment of the society led to the emergence of private property, class system, sociopolitical institutions and state. Changes in natural environment and population size led to the growth of 'Asiatic mode of production' along the river sides of the Orient having managerial bureaucratic institutions for controlling the irrigation system by a despotic ruler in a stable (unchangeable) economy. On the other hand 'in the ancient world' wrote Marx, 'commerce and the development of commercial capital resulted in a slave economy'<sup>19</sup> which enabled the rise of city-states. Frederick Engel had expanded the ideas of Morgan. He held that technological improvement as a means of production had increased surplus which traded increasingly and resulted in the emergence of middlemen, entrepreneurs, private wealth and culminated in the emergence of economic class.<sup>20</sup> To him 'state is the product of society at a certain stage of development'<sup>21</sup>. Marxian line of thoughts on the origin of state as a whole, describes the conversion of human being and their labour products into use by wealthy elites and 'coercion' is the mechanism which accelerated the growth of socio-political institutions for appropriation of surplus and mode of production is determinate factor of state emergence and development.

While the state was dependent for its income to the variety of sources such as - taxation, fines, the arbitrary performance of menial services to the state, revenues from trade, booty and tribute extracted from neighbouring people; the rulers have to control the society for which organized bureaucratic apparatus was essential.<sup>22</sup> Controlling power of the state was increased with the centralization of ruling authority, enabling the ruling section to appropriate surplus, generated in the territory (for technological development). Efforts of maximization of ruler's influence had created contradiction among the ruled. So legitimization of rule was required.<sup>23</sup>

It appears from the foregoing discussions that origin of early states cannot be explained by a particular causative like- warfare, population growth, institutionalization of leadership, material condition with mode of production and environmental circumscription. Or 'no single causative is axiomatic as the prime mover of origins of the state'. Without denying the applicability of the aforesaid causatives it can be assumed that 'various interrelated persuasive factors caused the origin of the state'. Social growth caused by the ecological changes had increased the

'population size' that began the warfare, maximized the size of political units and established chiefdom (from a village) with subsidiary offices. Inequality and exploitation of surplus by a small section had centralized the authority in a changing societal format<sup>24</sup> which demands heavy organizational abilities for state's survival and further development.' Thus H.J.M. Claessen has categorically expounded the following points about the early state.<sup>25</sup>

1. The state has a population sufficient to make possible social stratification and specialization.
2. Residence or birth determines its citizenship in the territory.
3. The government has centralized power to maintain law and order through the use of force and authority.
4. The government has to prevent external threat and internal separatist forces.
5. The population was so stratified that the emergent ruling section (small) and the ruled could be distinguished.
6. Productivity is high enough to ensure regular surplus for the maintenance of state organization.
7. The state had a common ideology on which the legitimacy of the ruling stratum is based.

Like the early state, the secondary states had also certain stages in their formations. A secondary state was originated from a primary state in the same region and the process was not dissimilar from that of the primary state. Barbara J. Price has argued that the 'secondary states' were formed as a result of the expansion of other states, themselves either pristine or secondary.<sup>26</sup> She also notes that once the process of formation of state has been initiated 'secondary' states go through the changes similar to those of primary states.<sup>27</sup> Similarly H.J.M. Claessen and Peter Skalnik expounded the idea that both primary and secondary states go through gradual and similar developments.<sup>28</sup>

### 1.2 Early Indian States.

Studies on early states evident from the archeological explorations while enriched theoretical understanding of the origins of state and its features, India in spite of being an unique area of early civilization is less concerned by the anthropologists although thoughts on state are fairly old in India. To Kautilya (4th century B.C) state is comprised with seven elements namely – a sovereign head (*svamin*), minister (*amatya*), populated territory (*janapada*), fort (*durga*), treasury (*kosa*), coercive power (*danda*) and a friend (*mitra*)<sup>29</sup>. But it cannot explain the origin of state in the Indian

subcontinent. Romila Thapar, however, has tried to conceptualize the process of early state formation in the first millennium B.C. in the mid-Ganges valley. She thinks that 'it was a transformation of a lineage society into a stratified society with concentration of wealth into a center and not for any single persuasive factors. Peasant-economy, rise of towns and commercial growth had accelerated the social differentiation. Reciprocal relationship between the ruler and ruled was legitimized by a *kshatriya* rule (traditional ruling-caste and wielder of military power)'.<sup>30</sup>

In fact, the Vedic society was pastoral and less stratified. Differentiation began in such society only in the Later Vedic period. By the 5th century B.C., social differentiation had been established firmly with the extensive use of iron that considerably propelled the production system and contributed to the fortification and urbanization.<sup>31</sup> So transition of 'pastoral tribal society' in the mid-Ganges plains began in the monolithic- chalcolithic phase but the societal format was changed considerably with the revolution in the production system and led to the formation of state in the region.<sup>32</sup> From the 6th century B.C. onwards state-system in India began to develop with more complexity particularly with the confirmation of *varna* (caste) as a marker of social differentiation. Beside the monarchical form of government, republican system is also known in India in the 6th century B.C.<sup>33</sup>

First historical empire-state was originated in India in the 4th century B.C. with larger territory and elaborate state machinery under the Mauryan rulers. Decline of the Mauryan Empire led to the rise of small states in India throughout the country. Cholas, Pandyas, Cheras in South India, Kalinga in Eastern India and a number of powers in Northern India had been emerged as states particularly when the 'Central Asian tribes' entered into India in the early centuries of A.D.. However, empire state was revived in India with the rise of the Gupta Empire in the 4th century A.D.. But its decline once again stimulated the formation of smaller states throughout the country. Decentralized force together with regional development led to the formation of small but viable states in Eastern and Northeast India too. Sasanka of Gauda (Bengal) and Vaskarvarman of Kamarupa (Brahmaputra valley) were emerged as independent ruler in the 7th century A.D..

The early states, ancient Indian empires and smaller states have been interpreted with different approaches. The Romanticists have constructed ancient India as a land of

'spirituality, a distant utopia.'<sup>34</sup> Utilitarian have viewed the Indian states as 'monarchical institution with a hierarchical bureaucracy with loosely concentrate power' where everyone exercise absolute authority in their own way for which ancient Indian government was barbaric and rude in character.<sup>35</sup> They identified the Indian socio- political and economic system dominated by caste and religious ideology. The Nationalists on the other hand, have attempted to interpret the Indian states as unitary and strong state with a centralized bureaucracy, headed by a strong monarch. On the contrary, Imperialist School <sup>36</sup> had developed the concept of *Oriental despotism* having similarity with Marxian model of the 'Asiatic mode of production'. Marx left the pre-modern Indian states in an unchanging position with a strong central coercive power for external warfare and internal exploitation of static village communities having the capability of increasing agrarian surplus with irrigation system .<sup>37</sup> However, Marxian notion have been seriously challenged by the recent studies which show that early Indian society was not in a stagnant position but developed systematically.<sup>38</sup>

Different schools and their studies although recognized the 'system of state' in ancient India with power-centrality, a bureaucracy having capability of surplus extractions, a 'defence system' for protection of the state from the external attacks and other essential characteristics of a state but the process of formation of state is hardly procurable from these studies. However, interesting contributions have been made by several scholars in recent years to conceptualize the process of the early Indian state formation, which viewed the state as the 'culmination of transition of lineage or tribal society' through the social growth where caste system or *Varna* formation was an internal dynamics.<sup>39</sup>

### **1.3. Medieval Indian States**

The studies on state formation in early Indian context have stressed more on the 'state-system' but process of formation of the medieval Indian states have been examined critically by the historians. In spite of rejection of the 'Asiatic mode of production' as a state-system in Indian context, Marx's influenced concept of 'Indian feudalism' is a major concern for the historians engaged in the studies on medieval Indian state formation after the 1950's. <sup>40</sup> 'Indian feudalism' model has identified the early medieval states as the 'decentralized' and 'fragmented' entities, originated from earlier centralized state due to the feudalisation of society and economy. The major

cause of feudalisation of early medieval Indian state was the ever-increasing number of (rent- free) lands, granted to the Brahmins and religious institutions since the early centuries A.D. and later to the government officials<sup>41</sup>. Freedom from taxation with special prerogatives of the grantees led to the emergence of intermediaries aggravated by the urban decay, decline of interregional trade and the paucity of coins in the 'post-Gupta period'.<sup>42</sup> Structural change in the economy was resulted to the political fragmentation of centralized bureaucratic state and led to the rise of feudal components, designated as '*samanta*'<sup>43</sup>. The *Samantas* since the 6th century A.D. had propelled the destabilization of the economic and political centrality of the former centralized state and led the formation of 'decentralized state system'<sup>44</sup>.

While applicability of feudalism is basically confined to the studies of medieval North Indian states, South India had witnessed a different type of state formation process in the early medieval and pre-colonial times. 'Segmentary state' concept has been applied to the studies of the South Indian states. This concept has been brought from Aidan Southall's study on Alur society in Africa<sup>45</sup>. Burton Stein, being influenced by Southhall has visualized the medieval state formation in South India as the 'continuum of governance ... formation' between the 'tribal stateless form of government' and a patrimonial state'<sup>46</sup>. Segmentary state concept has been further extended to the studies on the Rajput states<sup>47</sup>.

The concept of segmentary state is based on certain premises. Multiple locations of political domains having internally differentiated social structure, autonomous administrative capabilities and coercive means had formed the political structure of the segmentary state. The political domains were stratified and ranked, occupationally diverse and varied culturally even ecologically, which displayed complimentary opposition. The political power and sovereignty are differentiated in such a way that autonomy enjoyed by these political centers but sovereignty wielded by a king. Variations in sizes and capacity of these domains were arranged pyramidally with central, intermediate and peripheral zones in the segmentary state system in the Chola times<sup>48</sup>. In spite of several attacks and methodological criticism<sup>49</sup>, segmentary state concept continues as a 'state model' for the study of the medieval South Indian states.

Major medieval India empires such as the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughal Empire, were formed through the continuous warfare, formation of new administrative pattern and ideologies. In spite of voluminous and monumental researches<sup>50</sup> and conceptualizations, these states are often designed as patrimonial bureaucratic state.<sup>51</sup> Similarly conventional notion of Indian states places the state as a 'unitary, centrally organized and territorially defined kingdom with a bureaucracy'.<sup>52</sup> But the process of state formation is less concerned than the state system.

#### 1.4. State Formation in the Peripheral Region.

Extension of statehood into the tribal hinterland and state formation from tribalism in the peripheral regions have their 'structural nearness' with the aforesaid models of medieval Indian state formation. But their applicability are doubtful to the process of tribal state formation. Because pre-colonial Indian states have been analyzed either as a 'given entity' or 'fragmented identity' (from a given centralized state). While 'Oriental despotism' is static, segmentary states are confined to the South Indian states and patrimonial bureaucratic states were controlled by the strong royal family with an well organized bureaucracy; transformation of tribal society of Northeast India, Eastern India or remote periphery of the Indian subcontinent in pre-colonial period can not be described as the consequence of the decentralization of economic and political structure of the state. Certain researches on the formation of states from tribal stages, however, have attempted to conceptualize the process of transformation. James Haitzman,<sup>53</sup> B.D. Chattopadhyaya,<sup>54</sup> Surajit Sinha,<sup>55</sup> Hermann Kulke,<sup>56</sup> Amalendu Guha,<sup>57</sup> Sofia A. Maretina<sup>58</sup> and many other scholars<sup>59</sup> have identified few stages and causative factors in the process of tribal state formation. Such stages were -- peasantization of the tribals or transformation of tribal economy<sup>60</sup>, surplus generation through technological upliftment,<sup>61</sup> and its extraction by the state by coercive means and warfare, building trading networks,<sup>62</sup> extension of caste-based social hierarchy,<sup>63</sup> centralization of political power, state patronage to the caste-culture and religious institutions<sup>64</sup>, legitimation of political power by social means<sup>65</sup>. Expansion of political power from the nuclear area (center of the origin) to the extended territories in spite of the formation of a core political region, was failed to transform 'mono-

center state' to a provincialized state system. The tribal states were comparatively small in size and were govern by chiefs who assisted by an advisory council. These states were permanently settled in a particular geographical region and the main purpose of the existence of these states was to maintain internal law and order and waging aggressive and defensive wars. These states were homogenized by a common culture, religion, language and economic interest.

#### 1.4.1.Precolonial Northeast Indian States.

Emergence of states from tribalism in the 16th century in the multiethnic peripheral regions of Northeast India is identical theoretically with the models of the early state formation developed by the anthropologist. The Northeast Indian tribes such as--Ahom, Kachari, Chutia Meitei, Dimasha, Jayantia, Koch, etc., adopted different variables of state formation, already developed in the region which stimulated other causatives of state formation. Adoption of advanced techniques and technologies in the production system had transformed the subsistence economy of the tribes into a surplus generating economy. Appropriation of surplus, centralization of political power and its legitimization through the adoption of the exogenous (non-tribal) culture (caste-culture) were gone together. So the researches on pre-colonial Northeast Indian states with anthro-historical perspective have identified few internal dynamics of state formation.

Most elaborate and well documented case study of Northeast Indian tribal state is the Ahom kingdom (A.D.13<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century). The Ahom tribe originally migrated from 'Muang Mao' (original homeland) under the leadership of Shukhapha (1228-1268 A.D) and landed in the wide valley of Upper Assam early in the 13th century while they were in the secondary stage of socio-political evolution with stratified society having political experience and tradition of Muang polity (proto-state/chiefdom). The Tai-Ahoms in their *muang* polity were small in size and territory and ruled by a *muang* chief called *chao* (lord) <sup>66</sup>They were scattered in villages and fragmented into household units and were acquainted with wet-rice cultivation. The settled rice cultivation with the capacity of surplus generation under a common polity had begun the state formation process. Since the 18th century A.D. the Ahom ruling family began to legitimize its rule over ethnically diverse 'ruled' including Hindu and non-Hindu population, through the adoption of exogenous culture. The king adopted

the deified Hindu title like *svargadeo* and the kingship was detribalized gradually<sup>67</sup>. New offices and institutions were introduced and by the 17th century the political process was completed<sup>68</sup>. Theoretically, the Ahom state was emerged due to the unequal access to the resources and through the useful association of the people or social group having benefits from central control.<sup>69</sup> Warfare, conquest and hydraulic culture<sup>70</sup> were related factors. As a whole, the Ahom state emerged as a despotic state, economically viable supported by hydraulic culture, with military adventurism and political centrality, legitimized by cultural tools of feudalistic cult;<sup>71</sup> through a long process of transition of the tribalism.

The Kachari state was the transformation of early settled<sup>72</sup> village communities (clan) of the 13th century into a state system with the hierarchical social development<sup>73</sup> by the 16th century. The Kacharis adopted the Hinduism for legitimizing their rule beside the synchronic maintenance of tribal religious culture.<sup>74</sup> The structure of polity was monarchical<sup>75</sup> but the villages were autonomous, highly influenced by the ecological set up.

One unique case of evolutionary state is the formation of the Meitei state in Manipur which emerged without exogenous influences. Uniclan villages had initiated the process of the indigenous chieftaincy formation and 'head of the major clans' had achieved the power of social and political control.<sup>76</sup> Inter-clan feuds for controlling more lands led to the formation of tribal militia and other service relationships. Eventually the Meitei clan had overpowered other clans due to its favourable geo-political location and accentuated the political authority of the 'clan chief' which had been formerly diffused in the clan by adding a kingship. In the second stage, the king (Lainingthou) approached the village level priests, administrative head of the chieftaincies, and with their support he centralized the political authority. In the final stage, the Meitei state come into contact with the contemporary Northeast Indian states and inspite of immense socio-cultural influence from the Hinduism and the *Vaishnavism*, it maintained its primordality.

Like the Meitei, the Jayantia state also has been identified as an evolutionary state. In the beginning, the Jayantia tribe was guided by the clan leadership (*U-Langdoh*). But inter-clan feuds and regular raids initiated the unification of different village settlements. In that stage, sacred and secular duties of the *Langdoh* were

bifurcated between *Lungdoh* and *Doloi*. Secular duties and nominal political authority of the *Dolois* with the formation of village council led the Jayantias to form a proto-state stage. External influence led to the formation of the confederacies among the *Dolois* but no *Doloi* came forward to take absolute leadership like a *Raja* (king of traditional Indian politics). Rather, the king was elected. Hence, the king was ' *kin shyim munroo* ' or the slave king. The *Dolois* were independent in their *elaka* (*Raid* or division) but had responsibility to pay nominal tribute to the king during the time of ritual ceremonies. Gradually a council of minister was created in the Jayantia polity. Divine myth of the origin the *shyim* was attached. As a whole the Jayantiya state completed its formation through the evolutionary process from family to clan village to *doloiship* to *shyimship* and finally exogenous influence<sup>77</sup> modified the indigenous structure of the state.

State formation in Mizoram was comparatively a later political development. The Mizos (tribe) were fragmented into few mutually conflicting tribal groups having segmentary chieftaincy (petty state) prior to the 18th century. Warfare and elected Kingship (which transformed into a hereditary kingship) completed the process of state formation<sup>78</sup> in present Mizoram in the 18<sup>th</sup> century A.D..

The Chutia tribe of upper Assam being *hinduized*<sup>79</sup> assumed non-tribal socio-political symbols in the 12th century and after subjugating neighbouring area had established a kingdom in the present Shibsagar and Lakhimpur districts of Assam. Like other tribal states of Northeast India, 'warfare' was a major internal dynamics for the Chutia state formation. By the 16th century they emerged as a political power with considerable strength<sup>80</sup>. Similarly, Laur<sup>81</sup> and Tripura kingdom were also came into existence with sufficient strength and viable economic structure. The exogenous caste-culture patronized by the Tripura state for legitimization of King's rule over the tribe and non-tribes, hypothetical<sup>82</sup> genealogy of the king was prepared to show the king's traditional right of governance.

#### 1.4.2. Process of Tribal State Formation in Northeast India

A brief survey of the pre-colonial Northeast Indian tribal states shows the basic form of sociopolitical evolution from lineage or clan based villages to state system through the intermediaries like 'proto state' and 'chiefdom' etc. Their transition to state

system from tribalism reveals the following basic requisites and processual developments of a state in pre-colonial Northeastern India:

1. Tribal society with lineage or clan based villages, settled or migratory (nomadic) which were socially cohesive.
2. Intra-clan feuds or inter-tribal conflicts for more fresh land had precipitated the formation of broader socio-political units for providing leadership.
3. 'Warfare' under the 'leadership of the tribal chief' for collection of booties had strengthened the economic base of the emerging state. Successful warfare enhanced the power and position of the chief and led to the formation of a tribal-peasant militia and also had given a shape of semi-territory.
4. Technological acculturation and adoption of ecologically suitable tools in production systems of the settled tribal villages resulted into the generation of surplus.
5. Surplus appropriation either through ritual ceremonies or introducing elaborate bureaucracy for regularization of revenue concentration of surplus met the basic economic needs for the emergence of a state.
6. Ruling authority of the king (chief) became hereditary with the addition of a fictitious divine connection that legitimized his rule. Adoption of exogenous (caste-culture) cultural ideologies of hierarchical domination and subordination and its diffusion to the tribe by the state began the process of cultural change. Synchronic maintenance of primordial culture had opened the routes of cultural synthesis and 'localization of adopted culture' to make it adaptive for the tribes. It further legitimizes the transition of tribal chiefship to kingship.
7. Status of the state was dependent on the level of supporting economy with market networks having a common currency, specialization in crafts; militarily organized territorial defence, the maintenance of internal law and order, institutionalization of administrative machinery, and redistribution of concentrated surplus to the ruled through building of universally beneficial institutions and works etc.

Transitional stages, however, were always not identical. But internal dynamics of state formation were interlinked. Socio-cultural change was slow while political development was comparatively faster.

With the theoretical background mentioned above we'll examine the process of state formation of the Koch tribe. The Koches had their tribal societal format and mode

of production and their transition is identical with other tribal states of Northeast India which would be evident in the subsequent chapters of the work.

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  61. *Ibid.*, also K.S. Singh : *Tribal Society in India* ,pp.53-69.

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69. Ramesh Buragohain: *Presidential Address, (North East India History Association , XXI th Session, Manipur University, Imphal, 2000)*, pp.5-6.
70. Hydraulic culture of upper Assam and the Brahmaputra valley was, however, not identical with Wittfogel's hydraulic hypothesis (*Oriental Despotism*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1957, p.18) of voluntaristic state formation. Wittfogel sees the origin of state in following way-'In certain arid and semi arid areas of the world where village farmers had to struggle to support themselves by means of small-scale irrigation, a time arrived when they saw that it would be to the advantage of all concerned to set aside their individual autonomy and merge their villages into a single large political unit capable of carrying out irrigation on a broad scale. The body of officials they created to devise and administer such extensive irrigation works brought the state into being. 'R.L.Carneiro: *A Theory of Origin of State*, *Science*, 169(1970), p.734.

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## Chapter II

### The Koches: Locations of their State Formation and the Tribalism.

The geographical location where the Koch kingdom emerged is the Tista-Brahmaputra valley which is bordered by the natural boundaries. Two rivers, the *Tista* and the *Karatoya*, formed the western boundary while the *Baranadi* and the *Brahmaputra* rivers determine the eastern boundary. Bhutan Duars is the northern limit and the confluence of the *Brahmaputra* and the *Karatoya* in Rangpur is the southern boundary of the valley. In our present political map it is comprising of Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and southern part of Darjeeling districts of West Bengal, part of Dinajpur and Rangpur districts of Bangladesh, and Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Bijni, Darrang and Kamrup districts of Assam<sup>1</sup>. Geological variations, full with rivers, hills, hillocks, foothills, fertile plain tract, forest and mountain passes are the determinate factors of the socio-cultural format and mode of production of the region. Geography of multiplicity together with multiple ethnicities had significant role in form and formation of political power.

#### 2.1. River System.

The river system is the heart of civilization of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. Most prominent river in the western part of the kingdom is the *Tista*. It has its sources in the Chumbi Lake of Tibet, which comes down to Darjeeling district and enters Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar and eventually falls in the *Brahmaputra* in Rangpur. Socio-cultural format and economy of the western part of the Koch kingdom were closely linked with the *Tista*.

The *Karatoya* used to determine the western boundary of the ancient Kamarupa.<sup>2</sup> It was the natural frontier of the Mughal power and the Koch Kingdom.<sup>3</sup> The Sanskrit literatures, composed in the region, categorically highlighted the link of this river with the cultural format of Kamarupa and Kamata.

The *Sankosh* is a prominent river in the region. It enters to Jalpaiguri district from Bhutan and flows down to Cooch Behar and finally lost its course to the *Brahmaputra* in Dhubri district. It played a significant role in determining the political boundary of

the states emerged in the region. Still the *Sankosh* is the political border between Assam and West Bengal.

The *Torsha* river originates in Tibet and flows through Bhutan, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar and eventually falls to the *Brahmaputra*. Important political centers including the capital of the Koch kingdom and cultural centers had been flourished in the bank of the *Torsha*.

The *Dharala* currently is a very narrow stream, flows in the southern part of Cooch Behar district as a tributary to the *Torsha*. Once it was a navigable river and was the natural protector of the capital of the Kamata Kingdom established by the Khenas. Kamatapur, the capital city of the Khenas and early Koch rulers was developed in its bank.

The *Raidak*, the *Kaljani*, the *Jaldhaka*, the *Mujnai*, the *Gadadhar* and other small rivers flow from Bhutan to south as the tributary to the *Torsha*, the *Sankosh* and the *Brahmaputra* are closely connected with the societal format of the western part of the Koch kingdom.

The *Brahmaputra* system was the heart of sociopolitical and economic life of the region. The *Brahmaputra* receives a good number of important tributaries from the northern bank such as the *Subarnasiri*, the *Bharali*, the *Baranadi*, the *Pagladia*, the *Gadadhar*, the *Champamati*, the *Saralbhanga*, the *Manas*, the *Sankosh*, etc. His notable tributaries from the south bank are the *Buri Dihing*, the *Dishang*, the *Dikhau*, the *Jhanji*, the *Dhansiri*, etc. Important centers of political power, religious cultural and trade and commerce mostly developed along the bank of the *Brahmaputra* system. King Raghudev Narayan (1581-1603) and Parikshit Narayan (1603-1613) concentrated the political power of the Koch-Hajo (Eastern Koch Kingdom) in Ghilah Jhar at the bank of the *Gadadhar*. The *Baranadi* was the eastern boundary of the Koch kingdom during the reign of Visvasimha(c 1510-1540).

The network of rivers of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley had a significant role in the formation of states in the region since the beginning of historical period. As the natural frontier, the river system had pertinent role in the defence of the territory. Floods as a regular occurrence in the rivers had protected the region from the aggression of Bengal. In spite of initial success of Bakhtiyar Khalji in his campaign in North Bengal and Lower Assam in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century, the rivers system had stopped

the implementation of his ambitious design in that region.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the invasion of Mir Jumla, Mughal general, against the Koch kingdom in 1661-1662 A.D. was a sheer failure for heavy rainfall and flood in the rivers of the region.<sup>5</sup> Cultural format including animism of the tribes was largely dominated by the rivers. The *Kalika Purana*, compiled in the region has highlighted the river system of Kamarupa and important religious sites at the river bank which are continued to be exist in present time.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.2. The Surface

Fertile plain tract of Sub-Himalayan Bengal and the Brahmaputra valley was the land of peasantization of tribes with surplus generating capacity and significantly linked with the economic viability of the states emerged in the region. Foothills, hills and hillocks of Western Assam and mountain passes (*duar*) to Bhutan of Sub-Himalayan Bengal are also closely associated with the cultural format and mode of production of the people of the region. The mountains passes to Bhutan were main trade routes to Bhutan from Bengal and Assam.<sup>7</sup> These had political role too. While Mir Jumla, a Mughal general, invaded Koch Kingdom in 1661 A.D., King Prana Narayan (1632-65 A.D.) got shelter at Buxa Duar,<sup>8</sup> one of the entrance door to Bhutan.

Plenty of jungle and forests<sup>9</sup> with wild animals of large varieties and forest products are closely linked with the tribal animism, hunting, cattle rearing and their way of life. The availability of wild elephants in the jungles of Assam and Duars had led to the growth of elephant catching as a profession. So elephantry was an essential part of the Koch and Ahom militia.

## 2.3. Societal Format.

Spatial distribution of multilingual tribal and non-tribal population in the region prior to the Koch states formation is not well documented. Vernacular and Sanskrit literatures, composed locally; the Sanskrit scriptures, Persian literatures and certain inscriptions and 'land grants', however, have left some impressions about the societal format. Chinese traveler Yuan Chawng (Hiuen Tsiang) who visited the region in the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. had illustrated that the people of the region –

“were of honest ways, small of stature and black-looking, their speech different a little from that of mid India, they were of violent disposition and were

persevering students; they worshiped the Devas, and did not believe in Buddhism..”<sup>10</sup>

The *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, of Minhaj-ud-din Siraj, a 13th century Persian work, has reflected the distribution of tribal people of the region. It categorically mentions the settlement of three tribal communities between the country of Bengal (Lakhanavati) and Tibet viz. Koch, Mech and Tharu.<sup>11</sup> They had their own languages. The *Yogini Tantra* has also described them as *Kuvachaka*<sup>12</sup> or evil speakers. The *Kalika Puran* is, however, more precise in the identification of the people of the region. The tribal people were described either as *Kiratas* or as *Mlechchhas*. The tribal culture and their non-Aryan physical stature have been categorically illustrated in these Sanskrit literatures.<sup>13</sup> So the literary constructions of the people of the region undoubtedly indicate to the tribals of present nomenclature such as— Koch, Mech, Tharu, Garo, Kachari, Bhutia, Chutia, Rabha, etc. The Koch, Mech and Rabha communities are specially concentrated in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts of West Bengal, Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon and Barpeta districts of Assam and Garo Hill district of Meghalaya.

Beside the tribal culture, non-tribal cultural elements had been entered in the cultural format of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley before the emergence of the Koches. The Brahmins got settlement in the region due to the land-grants issued by the tribal kings. The Brahmin colony in the region is traceable in the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D..<sup>14</sup> Kamarupa was a stronghold of the Brahmins and a center of *tantric-culture*. Brahmins were also appointed in the state administration by the Khena kings of the region of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Among the non-tribals, *Kayasthas* (a dominant mixed Hindu caste) were most prominent (other than the Brahmins). The *Guru Charita* of Ramcharan Thakur, a 16<sup>th</sup> century biography of Sankardeva, has illustrated that the Kayasthas were migrated to Kamarupa in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries from Kanouj and Gauda.<sup>15</sup> They gradually emerged as landed aristocrats for their knowledge of advanced agricultural techniques and technologies. They were specially called the *Bhuiyans*. Forefathers of Sankardeva, the propagator of neo-Vaishnavism in Assam and North Bengal were Bhuiyans. The Kayastha Bhuiyans were distributed in the Lower Brahmaputra valley particularly at Kamarupa, Darrang, Barpeta and Goalpara;<sup>16</sup> and had great role in the contemporary

politics of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. In the administration, the Koch kings specially treated the Kayasthas.

Among the non-tribal communities, Hindus of lower social status were the majorities. Professional castes like--Dom, Hira (potter) and Nadial or Kaivarta (fishers and boatmen) were autochthonous communities. Few other professional castes such as--Teli, (oil men). Sonari (goldsmith), Kumar (blacksmith), Kahar (palanquin bearer), Dhoba (washer men), Tanti (weavers),<sup>17</sup> etc; were settled in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley prior to the emergence of the Koches as a political identity.

Daivagna or Ganaka (astrologers) had a special place in the state polity. The founder Koch king, Visvasimha (1515-1540 A.D.) had appointed Sribar as the Daivagna for the king.<sup>18</sup>With astrology as occupation, the Daivagnas were predictor of future of the people.

**Table 2.1:** Population distribution in the Brahmaputra valley 1881 <sup>19</sup>.

Bodo-Kachari tribes influenced by Hindus.	Kachari	265418
	Mech	57885
	Lalung	46077
	Hajong	3689
	Garó (plains)	23275
Bodo-Kachari tribes in the process of conversion.	Rabha	56285
	Madhai	13149
	Mahalia	6198
	Sarania	4718
	Totila	2539
Castes formed of converted Bodo-Kacharis	Borahi	(extinct)
	Chutiya	59163
	Rajbanshi/Koch	366739
Miri tribe		25636
Hindu castes	Kalita	241589
	Ahom (Tai-Ahom)	179283
	Kaivarta	105 317
	Dom (Nadial)	96779
	Kantai&Jugi	81931
	Brahmin	68784
	Ganak (Daivgna)	17390
Muslim		208431

The *charita puthis* (biographies of the Vaishnava saints of Assam) and genealogies of the Koch and the Ahom kings also mentioned certain other occupational communities such as Manjhi (boatmen), Baroi (betel leaf farmer), Kalita (indigenous

agricultural caste), Mukhi (image maker), Khanikar (mask and image maker), Sutar (carpenter), Not (dancer), Mali (gardener) and Keot (fishermen and oil maker).

So ethnically diverse population was distributed in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. The ecology and geographical features had determined their culture and occupations. The tribals with their clan villages and production system were basically distributed in the hills, hillocks and foothills of the region. Contrarily, non-tribal communities were scattered specially in the plains with advanced tools and technologies of production. In spite of entry of the Brahmanism and Hindu culture, Hindu social stratification was less penetrated in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley.

#### 2.4. Historical Locations.

Origin and growth of civilization in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley in prehistoric stage had its (historical) reference as political identity since the epic period. This region, before the emergence of the Koch Kingdom had been mentioned in different names—viz., Pragjyotisha with its capital at Pragjyotishapur, Kamarupa and Kamata. The territorial boundaries of these kingdoms were always not identical. The mythological heroes like- Naraka and Bhagadatta have been described in the epics and the *puranas* as the *Kirata* (tribal) chiefs of Pragjyotisha. The *Kalika Purana* has described the '*Narakasur episode*' and located the boundary of Pragjyotisha from the *Karatoya* in the west to the *Dikkar Basini* (*Dikkrai*) river in the east.<sup>20</sup>

Since the early centuries of the Christian era, Brahmaputra valley began to be described as Kamarupa. The *Allahabad Prasasti* of Samudra Gupta (c. 325-76 A.D.) mentioned that 'Kamarupa' was a frontier kingdom.<sup>21</sup> However, the *Raghuvamsa* of Kalidasa, produced in the Gupta empire (5<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) had mentioned two names of the region viz. Pragjyotisha and Kamarupa.<sup>22</sup> Kamarupa became the general political identity since the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. particularly with the rise of 'Varmanas' as ruling dynasty. Kamarupa under Vaskarvarman was emerged as a significant political power in the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. During his reign, Yuan Chawng had visited Kamarupa. In his account, Kamarupa has been described as *Kia-Mo-Leo-Po*, situated in the eastern side of the Pundravardhana after a great river (the *Karatoya*).<sup>23</sup> The natural boundary of Kamarupa was, however, defined in the *Yogini Tartra* that Kanchangiri was the northern boundary, the *Karatoya* was situated on the west, the *Dikkar Basini* formed the eastern boundary while the confluence of the *Brahmaputra* and the *Lakshya*

rivers stood as the southern boundary of Kamarupa.<sup>24</sup> This region was also known as **Kamata** during the Muslim period. Kamata was the western part of Kamarupa where the Khenas had established a kingdom in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Koch kingdom emerged in the ruins of the Kamata kingdom and the territorial boundary was almost identical with Kamata. The kingdom of Visvasimha (founder ruler of the Koch kingdom) was extended from the *Baranadi* in the east to the *Karatoya* in the west and from Bhutan Duars to Ghoraghat (Rangpur) in the south.<sup>25</sup> Under the leadership of King Nara Narayan, the kingdom got its highest territorial expansion comprising the Tista and Lower Brahmaputra valley and began to be known as '**Koch**' or '**Behar**'. However, the kingdom was divided into two parts in 1581 due to the internal conflicts between King Nara Narayan and Raghudeva Narayan, nephew of the king. After the partition of the kingdom, eastern part has been counted as **Koch-Hajo** and the main branch came to be known as **Koch Bihar** or **Cooch Behar**. In the last days of independent status of the Koch kingdom, it was extended from Bhutan frontier in the north to Rangpur in the south and from the *Tista* in the west to the *Sankosh* in the east.<sup>26</sup> In spite of geographical and territorial variations and differentiability in nomenclature of the region, present work fixes this geographical location as Tista-Brahmaputra valley which was the play ground of the political formation of the Koches and prefers to use the term 'Koch kingdom'.

### 2.5. The Koches: Origin, Original Homeland and Identity

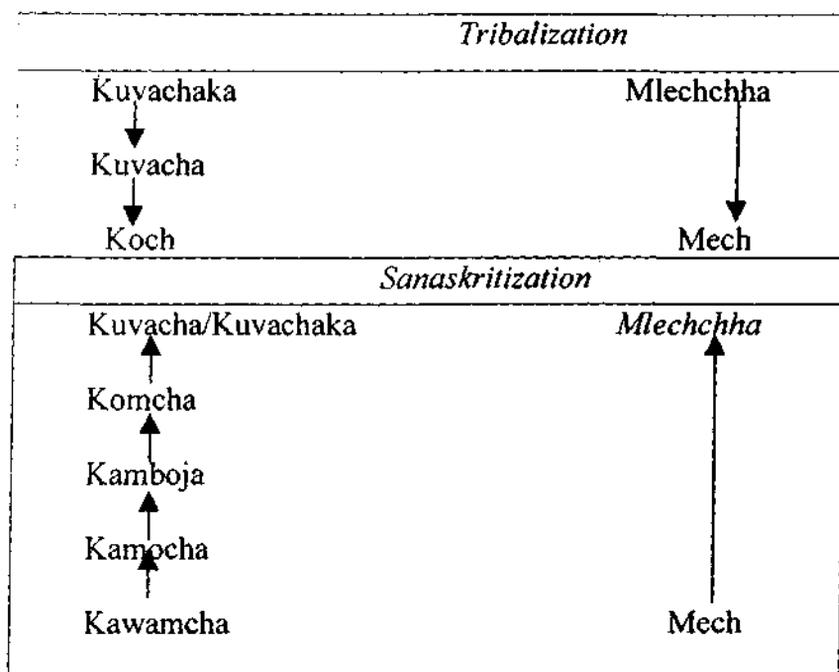
The tribes historically traced living in the Koch kingdom were the Koches and Meches who in our present constitutional stratification have been classified either as 'Scheduled Tribes'(ST) or as 'Scheduled Castes'(SC). But their origins and original homeland are still the matters of controversies to the scholars. The Sanskrit texts have described the Koches in sanskritized (purified) name such as *Kuvacha*<sup>27</sup> and *Kubachaka*<sup>28</sup> (evil speaker) aligned with non-Aryan (evil) tongue and food habits. On the contrary, the Sanskrit term *Mlechcha* has been derived from the name of the tribe Mech.<sup>29</sup> However, the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, a 13<sup>th</sup> century Persian work has mentioned these tribes as 'Mech' and 'Koch'<sup>30</sup> without any metaphoric expressions.

#### 2.5.1. Origins of the Koches.

There is no unanimity among the scholars about the etymological source of the term '**koch**'. Suniti Kumar Chatterji argues that the term **koch** has been originally

derived from the Indo-Aryan source *kawamca*, written as *kamoca*, which was sanskritized as *kamboja*.<sup>31</sup> The *kamboja* has been further, elevated to *kubachaka* through *Kome-Koch-Kubacha* continuum. Whatever the etymological sources of the terms Koch and Mech tribes, it is true that these were *sanskritized* as *Kuvacha* or *Kubachaka* and *Mlechcha* as described in the Sanskrit literatures. Contrarily, the term *Kamboja* or *Kuvacha* or *Kubachaka* and *Mlechcha* were tribalised as *Koch* and *Mech*, as illustrated in the non-Sanskrit (Persian) literatures and prevalent locally as the names of the tribal communities (as illustrated in the **figure 2.1**). In spite of differentiability in nomenclature, the present work prefers to use the term **Koch** and **Mech** as the nomenclatures of the tribes associated with the foundation of the Koch kingdom.

**Figure 2.1:** *Sanskritization and tribalization of the terms- Koch and Mech.*



### 2.5.2. Original Homeland of the Koches.

Like the origin of the term Koch, their original homeland and routes of migration to North Bengal and Northeast India are also debatable. Several scholars have come forward to identify the original homeland of the tribes with the arguments of probability based on certain identical nomenclatures. R.C. Majumdar and N.N. Vasu<sup>32</sup> have argued Kambaja Desha or the country of the Kambaja of the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent<sup>33</sup> as the original homeland of the Koches on the ground of

identical etymology. H.C. Ray on the other hand, has indicated another possibility that the Koches came from the northeastern part of the subcontinent particularly from the region between Yunan and Swechwan lies in present Myanmar. His argument is based on the possibility of existence of a Kamboja and a Gandhara country in the northeastern region of the subcontinent.<sup>34</sup>

There is another group of arguments in favour of Tibet as the original homeland of the Koches and Meches. R.P. Chanda has placed the Kambaja Desha in Tibet.<sup>35</sup> D.C. Sircar, in describing the Kamboja rulers of Northern Bengal of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. mentioned in the *Dinajpur Pillar Inscription* and *Idra Copper Plate*<sup>36</sup>, had stressed on the point that the Kambajas came from Tibet and they came to be known as Koch in the later period.<sup>37</sup>

The possibility of Tibet as the ancestral homeland of the Koches is very high. But R.P. Chanda and D.C. Sircar merely indicated it as the country of Kamboja. The term 'Koch' if confirmed as the tribalized form of *Kamboja* then Tibet was that land. But if *Kamboja* is *sanskritized* form of the Koch then it is contradictory to the previous one. However, far-distanced northwestern Indian subcontinent has very little possibility as the original homeland of the Koches. But northeastern Indian subcontinent is possible as the tribes like- Ahom entered into the Upper Brahmaputra valley in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and emerged as a political power. But H.C. Ray's argument is purely hypothetical. Tibet, however, has the largest possibility and is corroborated by the folk tradition of the other Bodo tribes of North Bengal and Northeastern India. The Meches of Sub-Himalayan Bengal (*Duars*) believe that their ancestors were the inhabitants at the bank of the *Mechi* river of Eastern Nepal.<sup>38</sup> The legend of origin of the Limbu tribe of Nepal and North Bengal considers the Bodo tribes of North Bengal and Northeast India as their cognate.<sup>39</sup> Practically the Koch, Mech and Rabha tribes had their close proximity and the legends prevailed among them are corroborating the Tibetan valley as their ancestral homeland. The route of migration from Tibet was through Eastern Nepal to Northern Bengal and then to Assam and Meghalaya. Whatever the date of their migration, the Koches and Mech settlement are exist in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley prior to the 12<sup>th</sup> century as it has been confirmed in the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*.

### 2.5.3.Racial Identity: Colonial and Post-colonial Constructions.

The administrative requirement of the British government<sup>40</sup> had begun the process of collection of ethnographic data about the Indian tribes and castes since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century which resulted into the stratification of the Indian population on the basis of tribe, caste, race, religion, etc. The Koch, Mech and the Rabhas, being the tribal people of North Bengal and Northeast India got considerable attention from the colonial anthropologists and ethnographers.

In 1872, Mr. E.T. Dalton had described the Koches as Dravidian for their physical characteristics.<sup>41</sup> E.T. Dalton had been endorsed by Mr. Beverley in the 'first colonial census report' (1872).<sup>42</sup> In 1891 H.H. Risely constructed the Koch tribe as the Dravidian and stressed on the possibility of admixture with the Mongoloids.<sup>43</sup>

Colonial ethnographic view in favour of Mongoloid origin of the Koches is more prominent than the Dravidian racial identity. In his Monograph, *Essay the First on the Koch Bodo and Dimal Tribes*, B.H. Hodgson convicted that the Koches belonged to the Mongoloid family.<sup>44</sup> Hodgson was followed by Dr. Latham who stressed on the Mongoloid origin of the Koches<sup>45</sup>. Similarly L.A. Waddell has categorically expressed that

'they (Koches) do not, as stated by Colonel Dalton, Mr. Risley and others, belong to the dark Dravidian aborigines of India but are distinctly Mongoloid though somewhat heterogeneous.'<sup>46</sup>

Similarly S. Endle corroborated the Mongoloid origin of the Koches. He even classified the Koches, Meches, Rabhas, Dhimals, Hajongs, Lalungs, Garos and such other tribes of Northeastern India within the same category.<sup>47</sup> These ethnographic constructions and observations in favour of Mongoloid physiognomy have been accepted by the administrative historian like Sir E.A. Gait who specifically expressed that - 'there seems to no doubt that the true Koches were a Mongoloid race, very closely allied to the Meches and Garos.'<sup>48</sup>

Postcolonial anthropological studies on the tribes of Northeast India have recognized the Koches as Mongoloid. B.M. Das has classified them within the 'greater Bodo family' consisted with other tribes like the Garos, Kacharis and Rabhas.<sup>49</sup> Historians like D.C.Sircar and Suniti Kumar Chatterji have recognized the Koches as Mongoloids<sup>50</sup>. However, possibility of admixture with the Dravidian blood is not

ignorable. Black colour of the Dravidian race had been noticed among the people of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley by Yuan Chwang in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>51</sup> So it would be more tenable to conclude that the Koches originated from Mongoloid stock having close affinities and cultural similarities with the Meches, Garos, Rabhas, Dhimals and Hajongs and other tribes of 'Bodo family' and had mixture with the Dravidian race but Mongoloid features of physiognomy remained prominent.

#### 2.5.4. Social Identity

While racial identity of the Koches is not beyond the scope of debate, their social identity is more controversial. They are now assimilated with the designation of Rajbanshi, a *hinduised* caste. They are often called *Koch- Rajbanshi* in West Bengal and Assam.<sup>52</sup> But literary sources of the Koch-history particularly the *buranjis* (chronicles), *vamsavalis* (genealogies) and Persian works have categorically identified them as Koch. Koch genealogies such as *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* of Suryakhari Daivagna, *Raja Vamsavali* of Ripunjay Das, chronicles like *Rajopakhyan* of Munshi Jaynath Ghosh. *Kamrupar Buranji* and *Deodhai Assam Buranji* have attached a fictitious *kshatriya* origin with the Koches and categorically mention that the Koch ruling family was originated from the adulterates union between Hira (mother of Visvasimha) and Lord Shiva<sup>53</sup>, a prominent male deity of the Hindu pantheon. Hence, the ruling family has also been described as *Shivabanshi* but not as *Rajbanshi*. Rather, the *Guru Charita* of Ramcharan Thakur, a 16<sup>th</sup> century biography of Sankardeva, has described that the *Rajbanshis*<sup>54</sup> were distinctive than the Koches.

With the beginning of colonial ethnography and decennial censuses, social identity of the Koches, however, became almost inseparable from that of the Rajbanshis. Buchanan Hamilton who visited Rangpur and other parts of North Bengal in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (1807-14 A.D.) had observed that 'the Koches were designated as Rajbanshi although Rajbanshis are not Koch'.<sup>55</sup> It Means that the term 'Rajbanshi' is a greater designation where Mongolian tribes entered after abandoning their tribal custom and accepting Hindu traditions and rituals. Hamilton was endorsed by B.H. Hodgson (1847) who expressed that the Koches, Meches and the Kacharis originated from the great Mongolian race and Koches or Rajbanshis are merely the most *hinduised* form of the common stock.<sup>56</sup> To them, Koches after *hinduisation* were

*rajbanshized*. So it is not unlikely that the Koches were began to be designated as *Rajbanshi* since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Table: 2.2:**Koch and Rajbanshi population in West Bengal <sup>57</sup>.

Community	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991
Koch	931	3522	17257	9714	14844
Rajbanshi	742733	1201717	1353919	2258758	2839481

**Table: 2.3.** Koch and Rajbanshi population in North Bengal <sup>58</sup>.

District	1971		1981		1991	
	Koch	Rajbanshi	Koch	Rajbanshi	Koch	Rajbanshi
Darjeeling	551	31505	192	62770	94	96745
Jalpaiguri	9572	329191	356	514274	538	656073
Cooch Behar	919	481304	1438	714221	2497	865622
West Dinajpur	1527	134976	3267	369015	5005	489642
Maldah	3561	50693	3793	83462	5139	114697
North Bengal	16130	1027669	9046	1743642	13212	2222779

Inspite of *kshatriyazation* of the Koches, particularly of the ruling section; Rajbanshi was not a preferred title. But the colonial censuses in the beginning had given a similar caste status to the Rajbanshis and Koches i.e. *Bhanga Kshatriya* or *Bratya Kshatriya*.<sup>59</sup> But it was challenged by the educated and landed elite of the Rajbanshi community. The Rajbanshi élites, fortified with modern education by codifying the common beliefs prevailed among the Rajbanshis, have argued that they are the descendents of Raja Vardhana who being persecuted by Maha Padma Nanda, fled to North Bengal.<sup>60</sup> Thus their social status is not identical with the Koches who had their ancestry with tribal folk. The Rajbanshi intellectuals of Rangpur had founded their caste organizations to differentiate the Rajbanshis from the Koches. The educated section of this community began to publish several works containing, scriptural evidences that the Rajbanshis are *kshatriyas*<sup>61</sup>(Poundra). The Rajbanshi Kshatriya Samity, founded in 1910 A.D. at Rangpur, had the basic objectives to establish distinct social identity of Rajbanshis, delinked from the Koches.<sup>62</sup> The census of 1911 recorded the Rajbanshi as the Kshatriya. But in the census of 1921, the Koches were also recorded as *kshatriya*. However, *kshatriyization* of the Rajbanshis since 1913 A.D. had rapidly increased the figure of the Rajbanshi population while the figure of the Koches

was declined. The figures of the Rajbanshis in 1921 was 1727111 which increased to 1806390 in 1931 while the figure of the Koches was decreased from 131273 in 1921 to 81299 in 1931.<sup>63</sup> It was due to the classification of the Koches as Rajbanshi. In postcolonial West Bengal the Koches have very little concentration. In North Bengal, the playground of the Koch power, now a days Rajbanshi is the most prominent caste in population figure but the Koches are very few. In Assam, the scenario is not different. The Koches of West Bengal and Western Assam i.e., Tista Brahmaputra valley more or less assimilated with the Rajbanshi or Koch-Rajbanshi social identity is now a monotonous one. But in Meghalaya, particularly in Garo Hills, the Koches have their *non-rajbanshized* identity with tribal culture.<sup>64</sup>

## 2.6. The Tribalism.

It is very difficult to define the tribe within a rigid framework. Multiplicity of characteristics derive from the empirical studies of the tribal societies in different ecological and geographical set up have entangled the definitional problem. However, these studies indicate certain general feature of the tribes and tribal society.

To the social scientists a 'social group usually comprising a number of *sibs*, *bands*, villages or other sub groups, which is normally characterized by the possession of a definite territory, a distinct dialect, a homogeneous and distinctive culture and either a unified political organization or at least some sense of common solidarity as against outsiders'.<sup>65</sup> Its economic typology is of subsistence character with simple technology, 'bartered mode of trades' and 'self-sufficiency'.<sup>66</sup> Andre Betielle has, however, reservation about the application of the general concept of tribe in Indian context where the tribals are inseparably linked with the non-tribals.<sup>67</sup> In spite of contradiction and multiplicity in definition, the International Labour Organization (ILO) in its 169<sup>th</sup> Convention, *Article 1*, has defined a tribe with the following words:

'Tribal peoples in independent countries are those whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulation.'<sup>66</sup>

Foregoing discussion reveals certain basic characteristics of tribal society. So Robert Redfield had noted distinctiveness, smallness, homogeneity and self-sufficiency as primary features<sup>69</sup> of the tribal society. With Redfield, certain other features can be

included to identify the tribal society such as common territory, common dialect or language, existences of common culture and distinct socio-political institutions.

### 2.6.1. The Koches and Meches and their Tribalism

The general features of the tribal society have their applicability to determine the tribalism of the Mongoloids tribes of the present study. Territorially, the Koches and Meches were and still are concentrated in the Tista- Brahmaputra valley. The Sanskrit literatures like- *the Kalika Puran* and *Yogini Tatra* have identified the territory extended from the *Dikrai* in the east to the *Karatoya* in the west and from the Bhutan hills to the confluence of the *Lakhai* and the *Brahmaputra*; as the tribal belt, dominated by non-Aryans tribes like Kiratas, Koches, Meches and others.<sup>70</sup> The *Tabakat-i-Nasiri* also recorded the same territory as the abode of these tribes<sup>71</sup>.

These tribes had their own languages, which are still in (strangulated) existence in the region. Although the *Yogini Tantra* and the *Padma Purana* have described the Koches as *Kuvacha* and *Kubavchaka* (bad speakers) respectively, their language was distinctive than the Aryan language. The *Tabakat-i -Nasiri*, had illustrated a distinct language prevalent among the Koch, Mech and Tharus.<sup>72</sup> Linguistically they belonged to the Tibeto-Burman group.<sup>73</sup> In North Bengal, Koch language is almost disappeared. But the Meches of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling in West Bengal and Western Assam are progressing with their own tribal language.

These tribes have their own distinctive culture. They did not accept the symbols of the Aryan culture without opposition and challenge. The *Kalika Purana* described that the *Kirata*(tribe) chief Ghataka fought against the Aryan invaders.<sup>74</sup> Their food habit was completely different from the Aryans. The *Padma Purana* in its single verse has highlighted the culture of the Koches that they had no respect for cows and Brahmins and they are accustomed to eat everything.<sup>75</sup>

The chronicles (*buranji*) and the genealogies (*vamsavalis*) have illustrated the non-Aryan culture of these tribes. These literatures invariably sought to attach a *kshatriya* lineage of the Koch and Mech tribes and illustrated that the founder king Visvasimha's (Visu) father was not Haria Mech but Lord Shiva. His Koch mother was cheated by the duplicity of Lord Mahadeva.<sup>76</sup> Whatever the exaggerations, these sources prove the birth of Visvasimha for the union between Haria Mech and Hira Koch. But it raises another question, why did the descendents of Haria Mech are called

Koch? It was definitely for the matrilineal tradition of the Koches. But after the formation of state with their *hinduization*, patriliney was established in the ruling family of the Koches. So from Visvasimha, Haria Mandal's successors have been counted as **Koch**.

Like other tribal communities, the Koches and Meches had their mixed subsistence economy comprising collective *jhuming*<sup>77</sup>, collective hunting<sup>78</sup>, cattle rearing and crafts for domestic uses. So in the early life Visvsimha was a *bargorakhiya* (chief cowherd)<sup>79</sup> and wielder of *aranya dharma*<sup>80</sup> (life of the forest). Their crafts particularly the *endi culture* (making of *endi* silk and weaving of *endi* cloth) was the expertise of the Meches. In spite of multiple threats from the advanced technology, the old tradition of *endi culture* is still exists among the Meches of West Bengal and Assam Duars.

### 2.62. Sociopolitical Setting.

Tribal society with the kin and clan villages having a leadership of the chief was the common feature of the Koches and Meches before the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Although the Mongolian tribes of North Bengal had participated in the invasion of Bakhtiyar Khalji<sup>81</sup> and were guided by the tribal chief, politically they could not cross the tribal bondage. Prominent position of the Koches under their chief in the 13<sup>th</sup> century also noticeable from Mymensingha.<sup>82</sup> Appropriation of circumstantial opportunities although established the Koch and Mech chiefs as political figures but they remained in the stage of tribalism. The chief was basically selected from the clan villages. The *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* and the chronicles have given a list of twelve leaders of 'Mech clan villages' of Western Assam who selected Haria Mech as their chief (Mandal) in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>83</sup>. The chiefdom of Haria Mandal was a greater political unit for the Meches. Similarly the Koches were also settled in the region with similar tribal leadership.

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## Chapter III

### State in the Making: The Kamata-Koches.

Historically, the Tista-Brahmaputra valley is not a void region. Growth of civilization and early human settlements are evident from the archaeological explorations and other historical sources. Human flow to the region from different corners of the globe in different historical periods and their admixture had increased the population complexity and paved the way for the cultural synthesis in the region. Rise and growth of states in the region and their interactions with the neighbouring power led to the growth of political institutions with localised characteristics. All these historical traditions had immense impact on the rise and development of the Koch kingdom. So the pre-Koch political development has been reviewed to construct the nature of the formation of Koch state.

#### 3.1. Earley States of the Brahmaputra Valley.

Pragjyotisha and Kamarupa were the early states originated in the Tisat-Brahmaputra valley which have been illustrated in the *Mahabharata*, *puranas* (mythology) and in the *Tantra* literatures. These Sanskrit literatures have recorded that the boundary of the Pragjyotisha kingdom was extended from the *Karatoya* in the west to the *Dikrai* river in the east and Pragjyotisha was said to have been ruled by a *Kirata* chief (tribal chief) named Mahiranga Danaṃ. His successors Hatakasur, Sambarasur, Ratnasur and Ghataka had maintained the tribal rule.<sup>1</sup> Ghatakasur was, however, defeated and killed by Naraka.<sup>2</sup> Tribal king Bana of Sonitpur (right bank of the *Brahmaputra* of Upper Assam) was contemporary of Naraka. Being influenced by Bana, Naraka had the fascination to the tribal culture and religion for which Lord Krishna is said to have slain Naraka and installed Bhagadatta in the throne of Pragjyotisha.<sup>3</sup> The story of Bhagadatta has been illustrated in the *Mahabharata*. The *Mahabharata* describes that he had participated in the 'war of the Kurukshetra' in favour of the Kaurava but fell in the battlefield.<sup>4</sup> After Bhagadatta, Vajradatta became the ruler from that dynasty and his successors continued to rule in Kamarupa (Pragjyotisha) for several generations.

It is very difficult to determine the exact time period of the early tribal rule in Pragjyotisha or Kamarupa and to prove the historicity of the illustrious episodes of Naraka and Bhagadatta. But it is beyond the scope of doubt that the tribal rule (*Asura* or *Danava*) of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley was not replaced by the Aryans. Naraka and Bhagadatta as ancestors were invariably connected with the historical kingdoms emerged in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley in the later period.

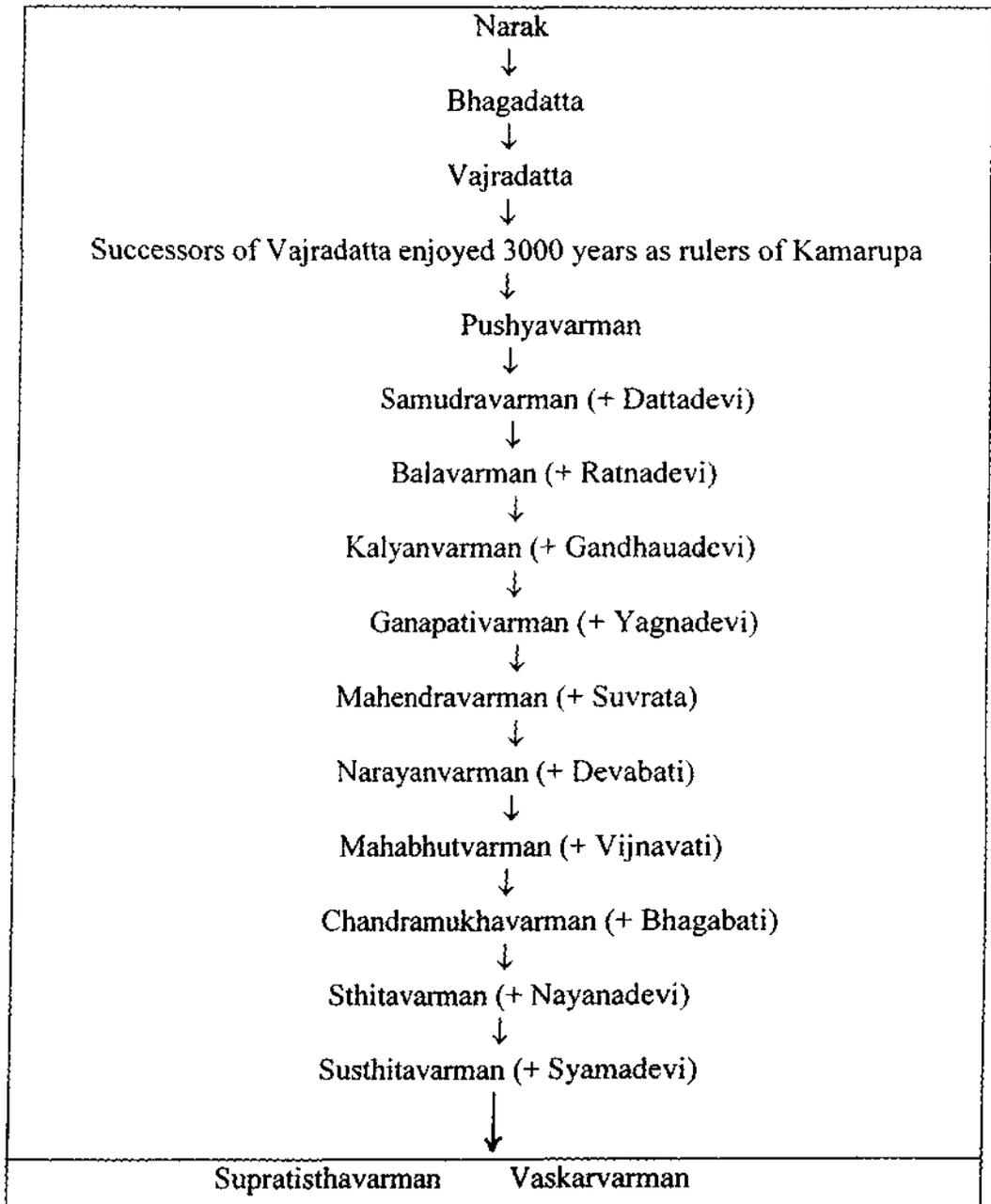
### 3.2. Kamarupa: From the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.

Political history of the region began with the reign of Pushyavarman, a contemporary ruler of Samudra Gupta (335-376 A.D.), the Gupta emperor. The inscriptional evidences such as--the *Nidhanpur Copper Plate Inscription* and the *Dhubi Copper Plates* of Vaskarvarman have recorded the genealogical table of the Varman dynasty from Pushyavarman onwards <sup>5</sup> as mentioned in the **table 3.1**. King Pushyavarman (4<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) assumed the high sounding title like *Maharaja Dhiraja* which indicates his independent status.<sup>6</sup> The 6<sup>th</sup> ruler of this line was Mahendravarman (5<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) who performed two 'horse-sacrifices'<sup>7</sup> which was a significant achievement for the rulers of Kamarupa in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and paved the way for the political prominence of Vaskarvarman in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Mahabhutivarman, the 8<sup>th</sup> ruler of the dynasty had adopted the policy of territorial expansion by taking the circumstantial opportunity of contemporary Eastern India, i.e. weakness of the Gupta power. He donated lands to the Brahmins in large scale in the Mayulsalamalagraha in the Chandrapuri *Vishaya*, near the *Kaushiki* or *Kusi* river <sup>8</sup> The *Kaushiki* has been identified with the old channel of the *Kosi* river flowing to the west of Purnia and fell in the Ganges.<sup>9</sup> The land-grants to the Brahmins beyond the traditional (natural) western boundary of Kamarupa i.e., the *Karatoya*, signifies the territorial expansion of the Kamarupa kings in the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. and its social legitimation by Brahmanical culture.

Most prominent and illustrious king of Pragjyotisha (Kamarupa) was Vaskarvarman (c 600-650 AD). Under his able leadership, Kamarupa became so prominent that Harshavardhan of Kanauj (*Sakala Uttarapathanatha* or master of whole Northern India) became his political ally against the contemporary regional power of Gauda (Bengal) emerged under the leadership of Sasanka (early 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.). After driving out Sasanka from Karnasuvarna (capital of Gauda), Vaskarvarman

reissued the order of land-grant to the Brahmins formerly granted by King Bhutivarman.<sup>10</sup> The *Nidhanpur Copper Plate* describes that Vaskarvarman was a lover of learning and propagator of the *Arya Dharma* (religion of the Aryans)<sup>11</sup>. Yuan Chwan's account (7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) has recorded the prosperity of idle worship and religious toleration to the non-Aryan in Kamarupa.<sup>12</sup>

**Table: 3.1** Genealogy of the Varman Dynasty



**3.3.Kamarupa: From the Late 7<sup>th</sup> Century to the 12<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.**

The successors of Vaskarvarman could not maintain the hold of the Varman line of rulers in Kamarupa. Salasthamba, a tribal chief (*Mlechadhinatha*)<sup>13</sup> had founded a

new ruling order in Kamarupa around the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. The term *mlechchha* indicates the tribal origin of the new ruling family. Subsequent rulers of this line like Sri Harsha Varma Deva, Vanamala (c835-60A.D.) and Balavarman III (c860-80A.D.) claimed their ancestry to the family of Bhagadatta.<sup>14</sup> Salastambha was described as 'a king like tiger' in the *Copper Plate Grant* of Harjjarvarman<sup>15</sup> but his immediate successors were not prominent figure in the ancient political history of Kamarupa.

Salstambha line was revived with the rise of Sriharsha Varmadeva in the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.. He extended the political influence of Kamarupa over the extensive territories of Eastern India and his daughter was married to Jaydeva II, the King of Nepal.<sup>16</sup> However, his domination beyond the west of the *Karatoya* did not last long and the next king merely maintained the core area of Kamarupa. But once again the Salasthambha line was revived with the accession of Harjjarvarman (c 820-835 A.D.) who began to regenerate the lost energy. He was an ardent follower of Shiva or *Parama Maheswar*.

Next king Vanamala (c835-60A.D.) had granted lands to the Brahmins in the village Abhisura Vataka near Chandrapuri *vishaya* in the west of the *Trisrota (Tista)*<sup>17</sup> river although the popular cult of *Shaivism* was his fascination. The *Nawgaon Inscription* of Balavarman III (c. 875-890 A.D.) mentions that Vanamala or Vanamalavarman (c. 835-860) had erected a row of beautiful palaces in the bank of the *Brahmaputra* at Harupeswar, the ancestral capital of the Mlechcha ruler.<sup>18</sup> Balavarman III was the last powerful monarch of Kamarupa from the Mlechcha dynasty and after him reliable account is not available about them.

### 3.4. The Pala Rulers of Kamarupa.

The grandeur of the Salasthambha dynasty was declined after the last quarter of the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>19</sup> and the last ruling prince Tyagasimha was died without issue. With this circumstantial opportunity, Brahmapal founded a new ruling order having fresh energies, ideas and state system. His son, Ratnapal (c. 1000 – 1030 A.D.) being a warlike king, had founded a fortified capital called *Durjaya* (impregnable) at the bank of the *Brahmaputra*.<sup>20</sup> His *Copper Plate Grants of Bargaon* and *Sualkuchi Grant* prove the long reign of Ratnapal and land grants to the Brahmins at the banks of the *Lohita* and the *Kalang*, respectively.<sup>21</sup> These grants also attached Bhagadatta as the ancestor of

this new dynasty of Kamarupa. Purandar Pal, successor of Ratnapala had a wife from the *kshatriya* family of Northern India<sup>22</sup> from whom Indra Pal was born who had fairly a long reign in the 11<sup>th</sup> century A.D. (c. 1030-55 A.D.).

The 7<sup>th</sup> king of the Pala line was Dharma Pal (c. 1090 – 1115 A.D.) who revived the old policy of territorial expansion of Kamarupa particularly in the western direction. He shifted his capital from Pragjyotishapur to Kamarupa Nagar which was located in the bank of the *Brahmaputra* near Guwahati.<sup>23</sup> After the death of Dharmapala, Pala rule in Kamarupa was declined and it was conquered by Ram Pal, the Pala king of Gauda (1084-1126 A.D.).<sup>24</sup>

Like the Varman and the Salasthambha dynasties, the Palas did not follow any exceptional policy. But they granted lands to the Brahmins within the kingdom while the previous two ruling dynasties did the same only in the extended territories i.e., beyond the natural boundary of Kamarupa. Moreover the Palas realized the needs of defence of the political centers from the probable attack from southwestern corner i., e., Gauda (Bengal).

### **3.5. The Tista-Brahmaputra Valley: From the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century.**

Political hegemony of Gauda over Kamarupa did not last long. Tingyadeva, a vassal of the Palas, and his successor Vaidyadeva tried to restore the lost prestige of Kamarupa.<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile the Pala rule of Bengal was replaced by the Senas for which Kamarupa got rid from the future attack from Gauda. But Bakhtiyar Khalji, a general of the emerging Delhi Sultanate, however, uprooted the Senas in 1198 A.D. which marked the beginning of a new era for the history of both Bengal and the Tista-Brahmaputra valley.

After the fall of the Palas of Kamarupa, the decentralized forces had entangled the Tista-Brahmaputra valley and led to the birth of numerous but mutually contesting political entities under the leaderships of tribal and non-tribal chiefs. In Bengal, Muslim rule was established by the early 13<sup>th</sup> century and Bengal started the repeated invasion to the Tista-Brahmaputra valley which was a new development for the political history of the region. At the same time, advent of the Ahoms in the Upper Assam in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>26</sup> and beginning of state formations of the Kachari and Chutia tribes in the eastern part of Kamarupa were closely associated with the politics and polities of North Bengal and Lower Assam.

During the time of invasion of Bakhtiyar Khalji from Bengal i.e. early 13<sup>th</sup> century, political center of Kamarupa was shifted to Kamata i.e., western part of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. According to *Tabakat-i-Nasiri*, Prithu (Barthu), the king of Kamarupa,<sup>27</sup> had checked the invasion of Bakhtiyar. The second Muslim invasion under Giyasuddin Iwaj in 1227 A.D. was also repulsed by Prithu.<sup>28</sup> Although Bakhtiyar, utilized the aids of the Koch and Mech tribes of the Western Duars in his Kamarupa invasions. it was a sheer failure. Contrarily, Prithu had full support of his subjects as *Tabakat-i-Nasiri* describes:

“when they (Bakhtiyar and his army) retreated throughout the whole route, not a blade of grass nor a stick of fire wood remained, as they (inhabitants) had set fire to the whole of it, and burnt it, and all the inhabitants of those defiles and passes had moved off from the line of routes.”<sup>29</sup>

Prithu realized the need of permanent defence of the territory from the enemies of southwest. Like the Pala rulers he began to construct forts in the southwest frontiers. His forts have been found in Rangpur and Jalpaiguri districts.<sup>30</sup> Attempts of fortification by Prithu indicates that the southwest frontier of Kamata became a great political concern for the successive rulers of this kingdom. In spite of it Prithu was defeated and killed by Muhammad Nasiruddin.<sup>31</sup>

However, the *Tabakat-i-Nasiri* describes that after the death of Prithu, Nasiruddin Muhammad on the condition of paying tribute had placed Prithu's son in Kamarupa<sup>32</sup>. But Nasiruddin's death in 1229 A.D. caused the end of the Muslim hegemony in Kamarupa even some portion of former Gauda was conquered by the Kamarupa-Kamata ruler. The *charita puthis* on the other hand, have left some impressions about a king of Kamarupa-Kamata of the 13<sup>th</sup> century A.D, named Sandhya who adorned the title *Gaudesvar*<sup>33</sup>. He successfully repulsed the Muslim invasion of Bengal under the commandship of Malik Yujbuk in 1254-55 A.D. <sup>34</sup>. Repeated invasion from Bengal compelled King Sandhya to arrange 'fortified defence' of his kingdom. So he shifted the center of power to Kamatapur situated in present Cooch Behar district.<sup>35</sup> Henceforth the ruler of the region began to be described as *Kamesvar* or *Kamatesvar* (lord of Kamata) instead of former appellation *Pragiyotishadhipati* or *Kamarupadhipati* (lord of Pragiyotisha or Kamarupa).

The *charita puthis* has illustrated another episode of the 13<sup>th</sup> century history of Kamarupa. It describes that successors of Sandhya were ousted by a Kayastha minister of the state, named Pratapdvaja<sup>36</sup> and he himself adorned the kingship but the location and the time period are yet to be traced accurately.

With the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D., control over Kamarupa became a troublesome task for any particular ruling family. The adventurers and usurpation were common. Singhadhvaja (c. 1300 – 1305 A.D.) had founded a new ruling order in the land by killing the *Kamesvar* of the line of Sandhya. New *Kamesvar*, Durlav Narayan was a contemporary of Chandibar,<sup>37</sup> the forefather of Sankardeva. Durlav Narayan (c.1330-50), however, was not a ruler of unified Kamarupa-Kamata. He had to fight against another chiefs of the region named Dharma Narayan whose title was *Gaudesvar*.<sup>38</sup> But the conflict was indecisive and eventually a peace was concluded between them. And on the request of *Kamesvar*, *Gaudesvar* sent seven families of Brahmins and seven families of *Kayasthas* to Kamarupa.<sup>39</sup> These *Kayasthas* were expert agriculturist who had introduced the advanced techniques of rice cultivation in the Brahmaputra valley particularly at Lengamaguri, on the bank of the *Baranadi* near Hajo.<sup>40</sup> They gradually emerged as a significant sociopolitical entity under the leadership of Chandibar, popularly called Shiromony Bhuiyan.

After the death of Durlav Narayan, Indra Narayan became the king of Kamata (c.1350-65)<sup>41</sup> who faced twofold pressure from outside i.e. from the Upper Assam (Ahom) and Bengal.<sup>42</sup> Death of Indra Narayan marked the end of the Kayastha rule in Kamata founded by Pratapdhvaj.

There exists another set of rulers of Kamarupa-Kamata of the period between the last half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century and the early 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. This new ruling dynasty was founded by Arimatta (c.1365-85 A.D) who was succeeded by Gajanka (c.1365-1400A.D), Sukranka (c. 1400-1415A.D.) and Mriganka (c.1415-1440A.D) respectively.<sup>43</sup> The territorial extension of their kingdom was limited to Western Kamarupa or Kamata comprising present Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and northern part of Rangpur districts. The outlying territories of western Assam or Lower Brahmaputra valley became the mastery of the *Bhuiyans*<sup>44</sup> and faced expeditions from the emerging Ahom state. *Kamrupar Buranji*, however, has described the vast territorial size of Arimatta's kingdom extended from the *Karatoya* to Sadiya with a fort at Baidyagarh.<sup>45</sup>

Arimatta was killed by Phengua, a nephew of Durlabhendra, the *Kamesvar*. But again, Arimatta's son restored the power.<sup>46</sup> This version proves the chaotic political condition of Kamarupa in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century.

Thus the Tista-Brahmaputra valley was segmented among the decentralized forces contesting mutually for establishing mastery over the land. Western part of former Kamarupa began to be identified as **Kamata** with its capital at Kamatapur. Kamata region had been fortified for the protection against the probable attack from Bengal Sultans. The region was facing the possibility of frequent raids from the Kachari and the Bhutias as both these power began the plundering of wealth of the Kayastha Bhuiyans, brought to the region.<sup>47</sup> Frequent changes of the dynasties undoubtedly created an unstable political scenario. Moreover, contest of power was not confined to the Mongoloid tribes only; non-tribal chiefs particularly the *Bhuiyans* also got involvement with it.

### **3.6.Pre-Kamata-Koch Political Traditions of the Tista-Brahamaputra Valley.**

The forgoing analysis on the growth and development of states and civilization in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley between the periods, 4<sup>th</sup> century to the 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. reveals certain dynamics of sociopolitical changes. These features had considerable influence on the formation of states since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The first and foremost point was the emergence of kingdom from tribalism. The Varman dynasty, dynasty of Salasthambha or other ruling families of Kamarupa-Kamata had their tribal traditions.

The territorial boundary of the kingdoms was determined by the natural frontiers. The *Karatoya* was the southwest boundary since the beginning of political history of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. The rulers from Brahmaputra valley relentlessly tried to cross the western boundary. Contrarily Gauda (Bengal) invaded Kamarupa-Kamata repeatedly. But the conquests through the aggressive warfare were short-lasting phenomenon for both the parties and the *Karatoya* had been remained the natural (acceptable) boundary between Gauda and Kamarupa. It was a common psychology of the rulers of Bengal and Kamarupa-Kamata to establish the single power domination.

Fortification with natural defences i.e., river, hill etc., and advanced technologies available to them; was also a common feature. Militia was consisted with locally available techniques and machinery like- guerrilla warfare and elephantry.

Economically the region was not a stagnant one. Coins were circulated by different dynasties of Kamarupa with limited scope. But cowry cells were the common medium of exchange<sup>48</sup>. The *Zamindars* and *Bhuiyans* were the agents of land revenue collection. Advanced agricultural techniques were introduced particularly for rice cultivation in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. But the tribals of the hilly area had been remained with primordial production system.

For the legitimation of political rule, Naraka and Bhagadatta were projected as the ancestor of the ruling family. The king was the leader of the polity, warfare and head of the state. Other offices were subsidiary. The Brahmins were frequently brought to Kamarupa and were endowed with land. The *Kayasthas* also established their stronghold in the Brahmaputra valley.

**Table: 3.2.:** Pre Kamata-Koch traditions of state formation of the Tista-Brahmaputra Valley

Features	Description
Nature of the process of state formation	From tribalism to state
Territory	Pragjyotisha / Kamarupa / Kamata, extended from the <i>Dikrai</i> in the east to the <i>Karatoya</i> in the west and from Bhutan in the north to Ghoraghat in the south.
Warfare	Inter-tribal feuds and Inter-regional conflicts were commons particularly with Gauda.
Militia	Tribal-militia with guerrilla-technique, standing army with elephantry, cavalry and infantry.
Defence	Natural and organized defence with fortification
Economic structure	Coin was circulated but cowry cells were medium of exchange. Agricultural surplus was concentrated regularly. Trade and commerce had been flourished. Rivers were the medium of transport.
Nature of administration	King was the leader of the society. He had subsidiary offices.
Legitimacy	Kingship was connected with either Narak or Bhagadatta. Land-grants to the Brahmins was also common.
Political center(s)	Pragjyotishapur and its vicinity and Kamatapur.
Political psychology	Single power domination.

Decentralization, anarchy and usurpation were also common phenomena prior to the emergence of the Kamata-Koches. Center of polity was remained in Pragjyotishpur or in the vicinity of Guwahati. But since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Kamatapur became the main center of politics.

### 3.7. Formation of the Kamata State in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century.

The Khenas initiated the formation of a state in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley where the above-mentioned political traditions had great impact. Racial and social identities of the Khenas are obscure and entangled with multiversal legends, myths and local traditions. But their history of state formation in the 15<sup>th</sup> century is beyond the scope of obscurity unlike the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century rulers of Kamarupa and Kamata.

#### 3.7.1. Origin of the Khenas.

Origins and early history of the Khenas are shrouded in mystery. Existence of local ballads called *Gosani Mangal* (on the king of Kamata) made the task more problematic to construct the identity of the Khenas. Buchanan Hamilton during his visits (1807-09) to the ruined sites of Kamatapur *Durga* or fortified capital of Kamatapur at Gosanimari had recorded a local tradition about the foundation of the Kamata kingdom by the Khenas. He describes that

“according to tradition, there was a Brahman whose name is unknown; but who had a servant that tended his cattle, no one knows where. According to some, this servant was an infidel (*Osur*) most probably from the mountain of Tripura, but concerning this, different persons are not exactly agreed, and some allege, that it was his mother who was of the impure race, and that she bore her a son while in the service of the Brahmin. The Brahmin ..... by his profound skill in the noble science of *Samudrik Jyotisha*, knew that the .....servant would become a prince, on this discovery, the Brahmin paid him to perform any law office, and showed him still more kindness by disclosing the certainty of his future greatness; for the servant in return, promised that when he become a prince, the Brahmin should be his Chief minister (*Patro*). Accordingly sometimes afterwards, it is not known how, became a king.”<sup>49</sup>

A similar narrative is also available in the *Gosani Mangal* composed by Radhakrishna Das Bairagi during the reign of Koch King Harendra Narayan (1783 – 1839 A.D.). It describes the story of Kantanath, son of a poor couple Bhaktisvar and Angana of Jambari village near Gosanimari, who was a servant of a Brahmin of that village. But being blessed by goddess Gosani, he became the king of Kamata, which had been facing a period of anarchy. He assumed the title like *Kantesvar*. His queen Banamala

had an extra-marital relationship with Manohar, son of Sashipatra, a Brahmin minister of the state. The king being revengeful to Manohar had killed him and served his cooked meat to his minister father. But the minister, knowing the barbarous act of the king, went to take the help of the Sultan to destroy the Kamatapur.<sup>50</sup>

These legendary accounts are not satisfactory for the identification of the origin of the Khenas and their Kamata Kingdom. But surely indicate that western Kamarupa or Kamata was going through a stage of anarchy that opened the opportunity to the adventurer like- Niladhvaja who is generally accepted as the founder of the Khenas rule in Kamata.

### 3.7.2. Identity of the Khenas

Like the Koches, racial and social identities of the Khenas are not beyond the scope of debate. K.L. Barua has constructed the identity of the Khenas as Kayasthas because **Khan** was a title of the Kayastha Bhuiyans of Western Assam.<sup>51</sup> Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed on the other hand, mentioned the possibility of an alternative origin of the Khenas. Relying on the description of *Kamtesvar Kulakarika* of Srutidhar Rup Narayan of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Ahmed connected the origin of *Kamtesvar* with the *Rajbanshis*.<sup>52</sup> But the *Rajbanshi* identity like *Kayastha* origin of the Khenas had been attached to them after their state formation in order to chastise (purify) their inferior social rank. So S.N. Bhattacharyya wrote: 'to what race the new rulers (Khenas) belonged is not known but they were rapidly hinduized and assumed Hindu names and worshiped Hindu gods and goddesses'.<sup>53</sup>

The foregoing arguments are insufficient to construct the identity of the Khenas. But occasional references in the local literatures and the ethnographic data of the colonial period are helpful to prove the tribal status of the Khenas. L.A. Waddell had recorded the existence of a tribe called *Khyen* in the Indo-Burmese border.<sup>54</sup> Khan Cowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed had recorded the similarities in myths about the origin of the Khenas and the Kachari king, Nirvay Narayan. So he asserted that it was possible that while the tribe was passing through Kachar, came into contact with the Kacharis and brought the Kachari myth into Kamata<sup>55</sup>. Moreover, 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century was a period of frequent adventures of the Shan tribes (Tai-Ahom) from Southeast Asia who established their state in Northeast India as we have discussed in the chapter I. So it is not beyond the scope of possibility that the Khenas entered into Kamata from the

northeastern part of the Indian subcontinent around the 13<sup>th</sup> century when the Tista-Brahmaputra valley had been experiencing an unstable rule of the adventurers. This point is requires to be researched further.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Buchanan Hamilton recorded the Khenas as the only tribe of Kamarupa-Kamata from whom the Brahmin take water. But in Dinajpur, Mr. Westmacott found the Khenas in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as oil pressers and cultivators and the Brahmins do not take water from them.<sup>56</sup> H.H. Risely, however, found respectable social status of the Khenas. He wrote in 1891 that

‘their social rank is respectable, and Brahmin, Kayathas and Baidyas take water, fruit, and sweet-meats from their hands.’<sup>57</sup>

Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri in 1903 found the Khenas of Cooch Behar in multiple professions who were segmented into different sub-sections viz. – *Mahendri, Teli, Barai, Saloya* and *Patiyar*. Socially they were superior in social status than the *Rajbanshis*.<sup>58</sup>

Inspite of multiplicity in the social identity of the Khenas the 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century official data prove their occupational and social mobility in diverse scale and level. It is also noticeable that they were *hinduized* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but during their state formation under the leadership of Niladhvaja they did not have caste status, hence stood below the caste hierarchy.

### 3.7.3. Beginning of the Kamata State Formation.

Niladhvaja (c. 1440-60) started his political career in a political turmoil of Kamarupa-Kamata. His virtue, dignity and leadership in the mutual contest for mastery over Kamata made him the ruler of Kamata having the title *Kamesvar* (Lord of Kamata). He constructed the fortified capital called Kamatapur situated at present Cooch Behar district and appointed the Brahmins in the managerial functions of state. Administration was basically the adoption from the previous states emerged in the region. Although, territorially the state was lying over the small tract of Kamata, the fortified capital city Kamatapur was of 19 miles circumference. A temple was erected within the city for the worship of family deity called *Kamatesvari*. Historical works done so far on the history of Assam and Bengal merely constructed the paragraph mentioned above and constructed Niladhvaja as an upstart.<sup>59</sup>

But the present work stands on the humble origin of Niladhvaja who appropriated the circumstantial opportunity and laid the foundation of Kamata state that continued the state-structure developed in the region. Fortification was foremost task for Niladvaja for the very existence of the emerging state particularly to check the threats from multiple directions i.e. Sultan of Bengal, Ahom, Kachar, Bhutan etc, and challenges from within.

### **Chakradhvaja (C. 1460-80A.D.)**

The second king of the Khena line was Chakradhvaja (c.1460-80). The Kamata state began to flourish territorially with him because he took few attempts for territorial expansion in the west bank of the *Karatoya*. A strong force was sent off from Kamata to face the Muslim force in Dinajpur.<sup>60</sup> Ismail, general of Ruknuddin Barbak (1459 – 74 A.D), the Sultan of Bengal, initially did not get any success but eventually the Kamata force was retreated from their conquered territories.<sup>61</sup> But the *Risalat-us-Shuhada*, a Persian account about Ismail's contest with Kamata in 1474, has illustrated that Ismail eventually defeated the Kamata force by a means of magical power and the *Kamtesvar* said to have converted to Islam.<sup>62</sup> This account is obviously an exaggeration and it is not acceptable to think that the Kamata state lost its territories as Nilambar, the next king, constructed forts in Rangpur-Gharaghat region.<sup>63</sup>

Another significant political development during the reign of Chakradhvaj was the attachment of the myths of purified origin of the Khenas. According to the tradition, 'the shrine of goddess *Gosani* was discovered in the form of a *kavacha* (amulet) in Gosanimari. That amulet belonged to Bhagadatta, the mythological hero of Kamarupa. After the fall of Bhagadatta in the battlefield of Kurukshetra, a kite seized the arm of Bhagadatta with that amulet. The kite after flying several countries came to Kamarupa and took rest upon a *shimul* tree grown in the bank of *Fatik Kura* (a lake) of Kamata. But the *kavacha* fell here and gradually sunk deep in the earth. The *Kamtesvar* came to know this secret from a fisherwoman and on digging the earth the *kavacha* was discovered. Accordingly, the *kavacha* was enshrined with due solemnity and placed within the temple of *Gosani*.'<sup>64</sup> Historicity of this tradition is doubtful but it indicates to the state's attempt to create a link with the mythical and popular hero of the land like Bhagadatta.

### **Nilambar (C. 1480-1498).**

Traditional enmity between Bengal and Kamarupa-Kamata in the border of the *Karatoya* again became a major challenge for the survival of the newly formed kingdom in Kamata. Nilambar (c. 1480-98 A.D), successor of Chakradhvaja, had to face a challenge from Hussain Shah (1493-1519 A.D.), the Sultan of Bengal. Historicity of Nilambar is thus beyond doubt. Without indicating the source, E.A.Gait determined the territorial size of Kamata under Nilambar that it was extended from the *Karatoya* in the west to the *Baranadi* in the east.<sup>65</sup> Political power was practically centralized to Kamtapur. Nilambar's attempts of fortification in the borders and construction of roads had strengthened the defence of the kingdom. A road towards northwest direction from Kamatapur to the Jalpesh temple through Mekhliganj was constructed and its both side ponds were excavated after a certain distance of one or two miles. Construction of a road to north direction extended up to Girimul through Kumari Kote and Muralabas had brought the northern frontier of the kingdom directly connected with the state-capital. The road from Kamatapur to Ghorahat through Rangpur was strategically more important for the infant Khenas state.<sup>66</sup> The forts in the southern boarder like Ghorahat, Hatibanda, Olipur,<sup>67</sup> Chhayghar, Manthan Kote and Fatehpur<sup>68</sup> were constructed by Nilambar to defend the future attacks from Bengal. Nilambar's attempt thus consolidated the kingdom.

Emergence of the consolidated Kamata state was a challenge for the Sultans of Bengal. Thus conflict between Sultan Hussain Shah (1493-1519 A.D.)<sup>69</sup> and Nilambar was inevitable. According to the *Riyazu-s-Salatin*, Hussain Shah invaded Kamarupa and Kamata after his Orissa conquest<sup>70</sup> and his intentions were to recover the lost territories of Bengal and to stop the aggression of Kamata.<sup>71</sup> It is said that Hussain Shah was instigated by a Brahmin minister of Nilambar whose son was brutally murdered by the king for having an illicit affair with the queen.<sup>72</sup> Hussain Shah's army comprising 24000 infantry and cavalry and numerous ships<sup>73</sup> finally destroyed the Kamatapur fort and Kamata state<sup>74</sup>.

#### **3.7.4.Process of Kamata State Formation**

The Khenas started their political formation in Kamata under such a situation when it was passing through anarchy, mutual contests and threats from within and outside. But within a short span of time the Khenas extended the political boundary

from the *Karatoya* in the west to the *Baranadi* in the east i.e. traditional geographical extension of former Kamarupa. They even crossed the natural boundary in the southwest. Their state formation reveals the following aspects.

The first point was the question of surplus generation, its exploitation, concentration and redistribution. As the Khenas initiated the state formation from obscurity, initially they did not have enough opportunity of surplus appropriation. But introduction of wet-rice cultivation with advanced technology early in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and legacy of revenue collection by the state machinery undoubtedly materialized the process of surplus generation and its concentration. Otherwise construction of a fortified city would have been impossible for them. Even after the fall of the Kamata state Hussain Shah plundered huge wealth from this Kamarupa-Kamata<sup>75</sup>. The trade and commerce had fattened agricultural surplus. The *Gosani Mangal* depicts the settlement of the traders in the Kamata kingdom. The *Sankhari* (conch shell sellers), *Kanshari* (bell metal seller) and *Kanyan*<sup>76</sup> (or traders from Western India) became the essential part of the commercial economy.

No coin of the Khena rulers yet been noticed although probability of existence of their currency is very high. The *Gosani Mangal* refers the minting of coin and preservation of gold coins in a strong room called 'Attharakota' within the fort of Kamatapur.<sup>77</sup> A place called *Takshal* (mint) near the fort, indicates the elaborate minting machinery of the Khenas.<sup>78</sup> Bhagavati Charan Bandhopadhyaya although claims that the *Kamtesvar* had circulated silver coins and coins were rarely available in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>79</sup> But until or unless Khena coin is noticed such claims are hypothetical.

For the ordinary transaction cowry was the medium of exchange in different part of Bengal and Kamarupa-Kamata. The *cowries* had acceptability as a common medium of exchange and store value which were circulated in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley early in the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. for common and ordinary transactions<sup>80</sup> which continued to be circulated even after the introduction of *Narayani Tanka* by the Koch kings.<sup>81</sup> The large-scale external trade is evident from the 16<sup>th</sup> century sources.<sup>82</sup> The roads constructed by Nilambar had contributed to the development of communication and commercial transactions.

Second point was the warfare and organized defence which were the determinate factors for the survival of the state. Warfare within the territory, i.e. against the similar regional emerging identity and with the enemies in the southern frontier i.e., against the Bengal Sultans, led the Khenas to construct forts in the frontiers and they developed the fortified capital city at Kamatapur which was already established as a center of power. Ruined sites of Kamatapur show the planned fortifications with advanced technology and defended by the nature i.e. rivers<sup>83</sup>. Buchanan Hamilton left an account of the ruin of Kamatapur in 1809. He observed:

“Kamatapur was situated on the west bank of the *Dharla*, which formed the defence on one side. The river has now shifted its course further east, but the old channel, which now occupies the east side of the old site, shows that formerly it was of great magnitude. The town was intersected by a small river, the Singimari, which has destroyed a considerable portion of the works, both where it enters and leaves the city but was probably kept within bounds, when the city was inhabited. The city is of an oblong form; and about 19 miles in circumference, of which perhaps five were defended by the *Dharla*. The remainder was fortified by an immense bank of earth, and by a double ditch ..... The rampart at present is in general about 130 feet in width at the base, and from 20 to 30 in particular height ..... The rampart has no doubt been chiefly of earth, and there is no trace of its having even been faced with brick; ..... The outer ditch has been about 250 feet wide; ..... from the greatness of the slope towards the country formed of the earth thrown out, the depth have been very considerable.<sup>84</sup>”

The fort had seven entrance doors viz. *Silduar* (door of stone), *Bagh Duar* (door of tiger), *Sannyasi Duar* (door for monk), *Jay Duar* (victory door), *Nimai Duar* and *Hukoduar*.<sup>85</sup> Doors were generally made of wood except the *Silduar*. Beside the citadel and other usual offices, existence of an important center called Takshal (mint and treasury) within the fort bears the testimony of state concern about the treasury, an essential requisite for state formation. Existence of a tank called Bholanather Dighi, Sitalabas (the summer palace) and Kadaldhoya dighi (pleasure jhil) within the fort proves the luxurious life style in the capital and capability of prolonged defence.

Beside the Kamatapur fort, the Khenas also built few other forts in the frontiers to keep the state in control.

Third point was the centralization of power and bureaucratization of the administration. Politically the state was centralized but rested on the leadership of the king in administration and warfare. His individual charismatic and integrative leadership was the prime factor in the longevity of the state. The ministers were primarily appointed from the upper castes particularly from the Brahmins who were so powerful that they could dare to oppose power and position of the king. The traditions and myths attached to the king of Kamata as we have analysed indicate that the Brahmins were the political advisers of the king. Bureaucratization of the administration was essential for the maintenance of the centralized leadership. But further research is required to construct the administrative structure of this state.

Legitimacy of the Khena rule over the multi-ethnic sociopolitical format of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley was the fourth aspect of their state formation. For legitimacy kingship, the Khenas were projected as *kshatriya* in the myths and traditions. So it was propagated that God Visvakarma, at the instance of the Goddess Gosani, had constructed the fort of Kamatapur for the *Kamatesvar*. So the founder king achieved the divine bless. Moreover mythical Bhagadatta also got attachment with the Khenas. Hence the story of Bhagadatta's *kavacha* was created as mentioned earlier. Finally adoption of the cultural tools and imports of the Brahmins by the Kamata kings completed their legitimization aspect. Appointment of the Brahmins in the temples built by the state<sup>86</sup> and their role in diffusion of caste-culture had returned a valid caste status to the Khenas.

The 'Khena state formation process' as a whole was a secondary one. Evolutionary ideas of early state formation are not applicable to them, as their tribalism is not yet constructed. But different processural characteristics of the Kamata state highlight the identical stages with the tribal state formation.

### **3.8. The Brahmaputra Valley in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.**

With the strong influence of pre-Koch political traditions and state system, Tista-Brahmaputra valley again became a center of conflicts and contests between the centralized tribal and non-tribal forces, particularly with the fall of Kamatapur in 1490-98 A.D. The region transformed into a sphere of ultimate chaos as Hussain Shah did

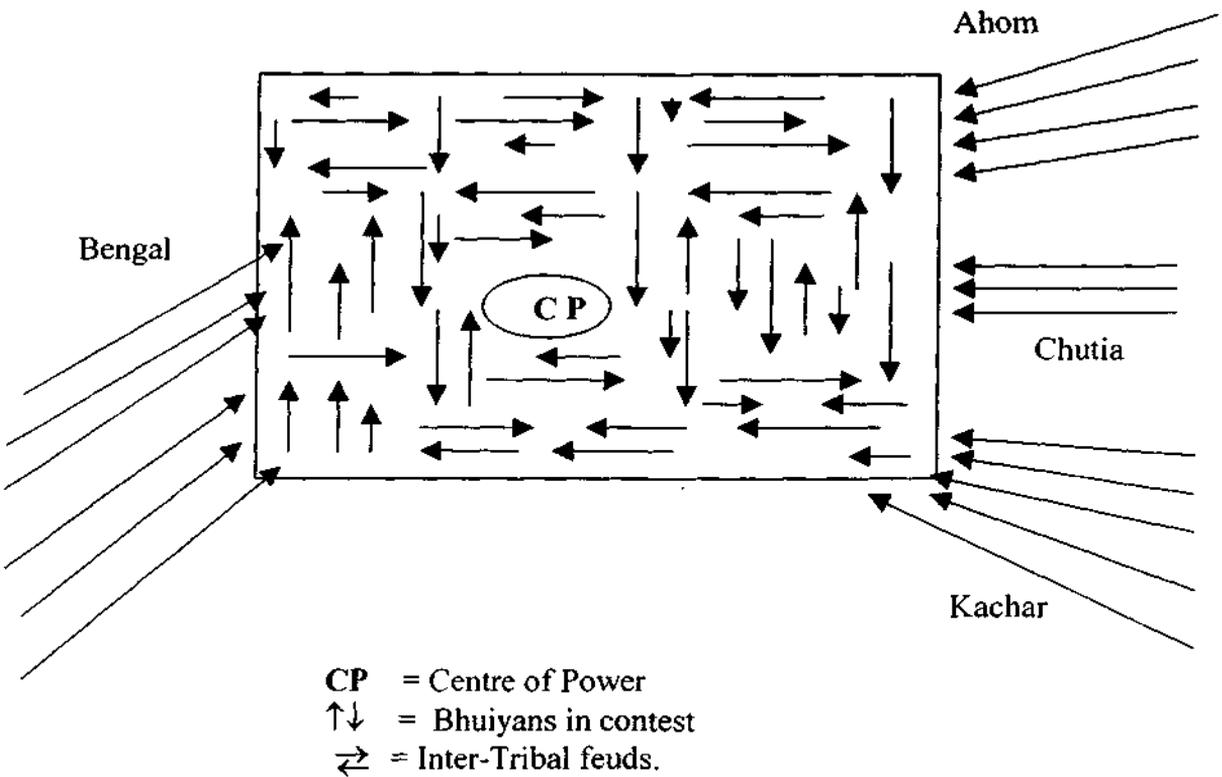
neither annex the conquered territories to Bengal nor restores the political and administrative stability of Kamata region. The decentralized chiefs called *Raja* like-Rup Narayan, Mal Kanwar, Gasa Lakhan and Lakshmi Narayan submitted to Hussain Shah but with the setting of rainy season, the garrison of the Sultan at Kamata fell in the hands of these *Rajas*.<sup>87</sup> However, they could not completely overthrow the political hegemony of Bengal. But anti-infidel policy persecuted in Kamata<sup>88</sup> by the subsequent Sultans of Bengal made the Muslim rule very unpopular. So political control of Bengal in the Brahmaputra valley was confined merely in a small tract of Goalpara.

In such a political situation the *Bhuiyans* came forward to control the political affairs of Kamata. Without going to the debate of origin of the *Bhuiyans* (*Bara Bhuiyans*) of the Brahmaputra valley, it is evident from the available historical sources that the *Bhuiyans* were not belonged to any particular caste.<sup>89</sup> Rather they were a class of estated with huge landed property, resources and political power. They rose to the apex of political power with their own militia in the late 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> century. The *Gurucharita* of Ramcharan Thakur, a 16<sup>th</sup> century biography of Sankardeva, describes that Chandibar, forefather of Sankardeva, was strong enough to repulse the *Bhutia* raids and to protect his rice field without the help of the king.<sup>90</sup> The *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* also mentioned the existence of large number of *Bhuiyans* in the north bank of the Brahmaputra valley in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century with enough landed property and militia.<sup>91</sup> So the *Bhuiyans* of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley were those who due to the decentralization of the state had established themselves as political and economic identity more precisely landed chiefs in the Brahmaputra valley.

**Table: 3.3.:**Class structure of the *Bhuiyans*.

<b>Designation</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<i>Raja</i>	Militarily strong and capable to fight against the outsiders.	Rup Narayan, Mal Kanwar, Gasa Lakshman, Lakshmi Narayan and others.
<i>Baro Bhuiyan</i>	They were capable to fighting against the tribal chiefs and could check the tribal expeditions	Shiromany/Chandibar, <i>Bhuiyan</i> of Karnapur.
<i>Saru Bhuiyan</i>	Minor in power and position was not strong enough to check the tribal raids.	<i>Bhuiyan</i> of Ouguria, Chuti <i>Bhuiyan</i> , etc.

Figure 3.1. Tista – Brahmaputra Valley in the early 16<sup>th</sup> Century.



The Bhuiyans became so prominent that they could dare to assume the title like *Raja* (king).<sup>92</sup> Some of the Bhuiyans had their dignified social identity like *kshatriya* and *Samajpati*.<sup>93</sup> The Bhuiyans again had their variation in class status due to the variations in their power, property and prosperity. Their designations such as *Raja*, *Bara Bhuiyan* and *Saru Bhuiyan* indicate the multiple locations of the Bhuiyans in the class status.

Inspite of multi-caste social identity and their multiple locations in the class structure they were independent to each other within their own domain. Although they collectively overthrow the rule of Hussain Shah in Kamata<sup>94</sup>, the Bhuiyans were engaged in mutual conflicts. On the ruined state structure of the Khenas, these embattled Bhuiyan identities of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century had transformed the Tista-Brahmaputra valley into a chaotic sphere.

With such a background of early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Koch and Mech tribes under the leadership of their chief Haria Mech, had initiated the process of their chiefdom formation. In the immediate proximities of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley, few other

tribes such as - the Chutias, the Kacharis and the Ahoms already germinated the seeds of their state formation from tribalism and trying to acquire more territory. Moreover a multifarious threat from southwest i.e. Bengal was a general feature of the early 16<sup>th</sup> century Brahmaputra valley. This scenario has been explained in the **figure 3.1.**

### **3.9.The Koches: From Periphery to Center.**

Political formation of the Koches began with the election of Haria Mech as the 'chief' (*mandal*) of the tribal villages of Chikina hill of Lower Assam, in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. The 'clan leaders' like-Panbar, Vedela, Bhedbhedo, Barihana, Kathia, Guwabar, Megho, Baihagu, Jeswe, Garukata, Judhabar and Dhekera had accepted Haria Mech as their chief <sup>95</sup>for providing leadership in the further political progress of the tribe. They submitted their ceremonial homage and tributes to the chief. Politically the small tract under Haria Mandal's chiefship bounded by the *Manas* in the east and the *Sankosh* in the west and from Dhabalgiri in the north to the *Brahmaputra* in the south was an autonomous entity. It was beyond the jurisdiction of any political power.<sup>96</sup>

Haria Mech was married to Hira and Jira, two daughters of the Koch chief of Hajo<sup>97</sup>. Without indicating any source, Buchanan Hamilton has argued that the Koches were united under the chiefship of Hajo in Muralabas, a place situated in the western Duars, 30 miles north from Kamatapur<sup>98</sup>. In spite of patrilineal tradition of the Meches,<sup>99</sup> the descendents of Haria Mech and his Koch wives were identified as **Koch** on the matrilineal line.<sup>100</sup> Instead of **Mech** henceforth the political identity of Haria Mandal's chiefdom began to be counted as Koch chiefdom.

The tribal chiefdom of Haria Mandal was incapable of generating surplus to be appropriated for state formation. Thus only way of surplus appropriation was warfare and plunder of wealths from the non-tribal chiefs. particularly from the Bhiyans who had the capacity of surplus generation and its appropriation. So Haria Mandal took some attempts against the neighbouring Bhuiyans although eventually he failed to extend the Koch influence in the region.<sup>101</sup> However, he was successful to bring the Koches and Meches in a common platform and transform them as a resistance and aggressive force which could be developed as a state. Thus the tribals under the leadership of Haria Mandal had placed them to the center stage from the periphery. His son Visu, who transform the chiefdom into a state, succeeded Haria Mandal.

### 3.9.1. From Chieftom to Kingdom.

Decline of the Kamata state order in the last decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century was a circumstantial opportunity for the further development of the chieftom of Haria Mandal. The first step of transition of chieftom to kingdom was the warfare of the Koches under the leadership of Visu against the similar tribal identities and Bhuiyans of the Brahmaputra valley. The *Rajopakhyan* describes that the first conflict of Koches was broke out with Turbak, the governor of Goalpara, recruited by the Sultan of Bengal.<sup>102</sup> Under the leadership of Visu Turbak was killed and the Koches got the taste of victory in warfare although the Koches lost their one leader, Madan (step brother of Visu). This source also claims that instead of Bisu, Chandan, another step brother of Visu, was entrusted the political authority to rule over the newly conquered territories and since then. the Koches began to count their calendar called *Raja Saka* (from 1510 A.D.)<sup>103</sup> Chandan, however, has not been recognized as the founder king of the Koches in other historical sources.

It is often argued that Visu got the allegiance of the other tribal chieftoms of Brahmaputra valley as mentioned in the table 3.4<sup>104</sup> as these chieftoms were the cognates of the 'greater Bado family'. But it seems quite impossible that these chieftoms willingly supported Visu if not defeated by Visu. because each chieftom wanted its own expansion. Few other chieftoms (not appeared in the table 3.4) like – Boku, Luki, Chaigaon, Hengerabari, Aliabari, Kamtabari, Bafarampur, Karaibari, and Darrang<sup>105</sup> were brought under the control and leadership of Visu. The tribal solidarity established by Bisu, became a great challenge for the political prominece of the Bhuiyans.

Within a short span of time Visu fought against the Bhuiyans of the Brahmaputra valley. Some of the Bhuiyans were settled in terms of the payment of annual tribute while others were killed and their territories annexed to the Koch chieftom. Few Buiyans fled from their estates<sup>106</sup>. It is very difficult to determine the exact location and strength of the estates of the Bhuiyans (as mentioned in the table 3.5). But it is beyond doubt that the Bhuyans of Phulguri, Karnapur and Bijni were militarily stronger than the tribal militia of Visu and they offered heavy resistance to the Koches. But Visu utilized the tribal technique of guerrilla warfare and by unusual means (like attack on the festival days) he successfully over-powered the Bhuiyans.

**Table: 3.4:** Tribal chiefdoms of the Brahmaputra Valley in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Name of the Chiefdom	Chief/Tribe	Locations
Dimrua	Garos	South of the confluence of the Kalang and the Brahmaputra.
Panbari	-	West of Dimrua
Beltola	Koch	Southwest of Guwahati
Rani	Garos	Southwest of Guwahati
Barduar	„	Near the Garo hills
Mairapur	-	East of Barduar
Bholagram	Mech	East of Mairapur
Lakiduar	Garos	West of Guwahati
Patan Duar	„	Adjacent to Laki Duar in the west.
Bangaon	„	West of Patan Duar

**Table 3.5:** Visvasimha's campaign against the Bhuiyans.

Name/Locations of the Bhuiyans	Caste/Status/Size	Result(s)
Bara Bhuiyan	Brahmin/big in size	Estate was annexed to the Koch chiefdom.
Saru Bhuiyan	Brahmin/small in size	„
Bhuiyan of Ouguri	-	„
Chhuti Bhuiyan	Daivagña	„
Kusum Bhuiyan	-	Kusum Bhuiyan surrendered his properties to Visu.
Dighala Bhuiyan	-	Bhuiyan was killed and his estate was annexed to the Koch chiefdom.
Kaliya Bhuiyan	-	„
Jhargaya Bhuiyan	-	„
Kabilas	-	„
Karnapur Bhuiyan	Militarily strong	He resisted the Koch invasion. Visu with the guerilla warfare in the popular festival days ( <i>bihu</i> ) killed the Bhuiyan.
Phulguri	„	„
Bijni	„	„
Pratap Bhuiyan of Pandu	„	Bhuiyan's brother was killed. Properties were confiscated. Pratap Bhuiyan fled to the Ahom kingdom.

Visu increased the territorial size of the chiefdom through the aggressive warfare and this territorial formation led him to declare himself as a **King Visvasimha**. The Brahmins and the *Daivagnas* (astrologers) performed the rituals of his coronation

ceremony while the Koch, Mech, Kachari and other tribal subjects including the *Deodhais* (tribal priest) actively supported the kingship of Visvasimha<sup>107</sup>. This ceremony was the first step in the process of elevation of the status of a tribal chief to a king. 'The chiefship had been confined to the kin, clan and tribe but kingship was non-tribal. So the non-tribal priests (Brahmin) performed the non-tribal rituals.

The Bhuiyans of considerable military strength did not accept the emergence of Visvasimha as a king. Kharo Bhuiyan (Saru Bhuiyan) of Upper Assam and Narayan Bhuiyan, a vassal of the Ahoms had challenged the kingship of Visvasimha. But Visvasimha eventually defeated them<sup>108</sup>. He plundered of the estates of the Bhuiyans including their military weapons like- bows, spears, swords, hatchet, etc. So continuity of warfare had increased the territorial size of the kingdom which became identical with the former Kamarupa and Kamata i.e. Tista-Brahmaputra valley.

**Table: 3.6:** Bhuiyan challenge to Visvasimha.

Bhuiyan	Location/Strength	Year	Consequence(s)
Kharo Bhuiyan	Upper Assam/ had the status like <i>Raja</i> of Bhuiyans of first category of Table 3.3.	1527 A.D.	The Bhuiyan was killed. Visvasimha plundered the estate specially the weapons like-bows, arrows, shields, spears, hatchet and swords.
Narayan Bhuiyan	Vassal of the Ahom. He denied the kingship of Visvasimha	1533 A.D.	Bhuiyan inspite of offering serious challenge, eventually killed by Visvasimha. The Koches captured the fort of Narayan Bhuiyan. It contributed to the growth of Koch militia.

Emergence of the Koches as a political entity and their successful warfare had alarmed the neighbouring states i.e. Bengal, the Ahoms and Bhutan (see table 3.7). The Ahoms, an emerging tribal state of upper Assam integrated under the kingship of Dihingia Suhungmung Raja (1497 – 1539 A.D.), after defeating certain tribal powers of upper Assam<sup>109</sup> were looking towards Lower Assam. Hence conflict between the Koches and Ahoms was inevitable. At the same time Bengal was looking towards the Brahmaputra valley. The *Buranjis* claim that Visvasimha had acknowledge the supremacy of the Ahoms in 1459 *Saka* or 1539 A.D. and agreed to pay a nominal annual tribute.<sup>110</sup> The Koch genealogies on the other hand describe that Visvasimha had attacked the Ahom territory and the Koches retreated from merely for the shortages of sufficient sources and preparation.<sup>111</sup> So the historical sources are contradictory

about the exact relationship between the Koches and the Ahoms during the reign of Visvasimha .So it can be assumed that both the Ahoms and the Koches had carrying on the aggressive warfare .

**Table: 3.7.** Visvasimha's conflict with the neighbours.

Power	Description(s)	Year(s)	Result(s)
Ahom	Under the leadership of king Suhungmang (1497-1539 A.D.) the Ahoms established a centralized state extended from Sadiya in the east to the <i>Kalang</i> river in the west.	1533-37	Visvasimha's attempt against the Ahom was abortive.
Sultans of Bengal	Nushrat Shah (1519-1532), Firuz Shah (1532-33) and Muhammad shah (1533-38) continued the aggressive warfare in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley.	1527	The aggressive policy of the Sultans did not last long.
Bhutan	Bhutan was a state with diarchic rule under the <i>Dharma Raja</i> (political and religious) and <i>Dev Raja</i> (administration). Bhutan was closely related to the emergence of the Koch kingdom.	-	Bhutan agreed to pay tribute to Visvsimha.

The Sultans of Bengal who like their predecessors in Gauda followed the aggressive policies towards the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. The army of the Sultans under the commandership of Bar Uzir,<sup>112</sup> Bit Malik<sup>113</sup> and Turbak<sup>114</sup> entered into the Brahmaputra valley but eventually retreated.<sup>115</sup> The invasions from the Sultan of Bengal could not establish any permanent blockade for the further growth of the Koch kingdom. Visvasimha, however, avoided direct confrontation with Bengal.

Neighbour of the Koch kingdom in the northern frontier was Bhutan that was associated with the Koch state formation since the beginning. The *Rajopakhyan* mentions that Visvasimha sent a messenger with a letter to **Deva Raja** and **Dharma Raja** of Bhutan; <sup>116</sup>claiming tribute with the following words:

“You have always been remained subordinate to the rulers of Kamarupa-Kamata but due to anarchy in the region you are enjoying autonomy. But I am now the king of Kamarupa being blessed by the Goddess Bhagavati, so you must pay tribute otherwise be prepared for war.”<sup>117</sup>

Bhutan initially denied paying tribute to Visvasimha but being afraid of rapid growth of the Koch power eventually acknowledged the Koch supremacy. Bhutan also

promised to render military service to the Koches in their future warfare against other tribal rulers.<sup>118</sup>

The *Rajopakhyan* also claims that Visvasimha after confirming financial and military tributes from Bhutan had proceeded to conquer Gauda when Islam Shah was the Emperor of Delhi.<sup>119</sup> Similarly the *Yogini Tantra* described Visvasimha as the conqueror of *Panchagauda*.<sup>120</sup> But such claims are not corroborated by any other source. More over Visvasimha was died (1540 A.D.) before Islam Khan became the Afghan Emperor of Delhi in 1545 A.D. So Visvasimha's successful attempt against Gauda cannot be taken as a confirm fact but only indicate that Visvasimha like the previous rulers of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley wanted to cross the *Karatoya*.

'Aggressive warfare' led by Visvasimha had transformed the small chiefdom of the Koches into a kingdom territorially defined by the *Karatoya* in the west to the *Baranadi* in the east and from Bhutan frontier in the north to Bengal frontier in Rangpur in the south. Visvasimha also took few innovative steps for territorial defence, formation of a militia and managerial functions of the emerging kingdom<sup>121</sup>.

Chikina, a village Lower Assam was the beginner of the political centrality. But with the territorial expansion Visvasimha shifted the center power to Hingulabas,<sup>122</sup> a village in the plains of Western Duars.<sup>123</sup> Hingulabas was a temporary capital. Finally it was shifted to Kamatapur,<sup>124</sup> the capital of the former kingdom under the Khenas. It served two major purpose of the state formation. First was the control over the surplus generating peasantized economy. Secondly the Koches moved from the periphery to the center or heart of the political power.

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  69. Jadunath Sarkar, *op.cit.*, p.143. M.R. Tarafdar, however, determined the date of Hussain Shah as 1494-1519 A.D. M.R. Tarafdar: *op.cit.*,p. 37.
  70. *Riyazu- u-Salatin*, p.132.
  71. Jadunath Sarkar: *op.cit.*, p.146.
  72. Montgomery Martin: *The History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India (5 vols.1838)*, reprint ed..(Delhi, Cosmo Publications, 1976), vol.V, *Rangpur and Assam*, pp.410-11; E.A. Gait:*op.cit.*, p.45;Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri:*op.cit.*, p.224;R.C. Majumdar: *History of Medieval Bengal*, (Calcutta ,G. Bharadwaj and Co. 1973), p.50.
  73. *Riyazu-s-Salatin*, p.132, H. Blochmann: Koch Bihar, Koch Hajo and Assam in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, *JASB*, .7.11(1872), p.79.
  74. R.C. Majumdar: *History of Medeival Bengal*, p.50; N.N.Acharyya:*op.cit.*, p. 175;E.A.Gait:*op.cit.*, pp. 44-45.
  75. *Riyazu-s-Salatin*, p.133.
  76. *Gosani Mangal*, p. 84. The traders of Western India who had a great role in the trade and commerce of the Koch state were used to call as Kayan the local language. Bhagabati Charan Bandopadhyay: *Cooch Biharer Itihas*, (Cooch Behar, 1884), reprinted and edited by Nipendra Nath Pal: (Calcutta, Anima Prakasani, 1987), p.20.
  77. *Gosani Mangal*, p.86.

78. Shyamchand Mukhopadhyay: *Koch Behar Jelar Purakirti*, (Calcutta, 1381 B.S.), p.34.
79. Bhagavati Charan Bondhyopadhyay: *op.cit.*, p.52.
80. N.G. Rhodes and S.K. Bose: *The Coinage of Assam, Pre-Ahom Period*, pp. 62-64.
81. Blochmann: *loc cit.*, p.78.
82. Ralf Fitch, in William Foster (ed): *Early Travels in India, 1583-1619*, reprint ed., (New Delhi, S. Chand & Co., 1968).
83. See *Plates 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3*.
84. Montgomery Martin: *op.cit.*, pp.426-38; Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op.cit.*, pp.426-38.
85. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op.cit.*, p.81; Shyam Chand Mukhopadhyay: *op.cit.*, p.30.
86. See *Plate 7.2. Gosani Mangal* has versified that priest as a Brahmin from Mithila (*Maithili Brahmin*) and *Deories* as *Chandal*. *Gosani Mangal*, p.102
87. *Riyazu-s-Salatin*, pp.132-33.
88. Haliram Dhekial Phukan: *Assam Buranji*, p.11.
89. The term *Barobhuiyans* (12 *Bhuiyans*) does not mean that *Bhuiyans* were 12 in number. Numerical figure 12 (*baro*) is symbolic in the Tista-Brahmaputra alley, such as 12 Mech village, 12 Mech leader, 12 *Karzi*, etc. There are two well-known traditions about the origin of the *Bhuiyans* of Brahmaputra valley. The *Bhuiyans* of the north bank of the *Brahmaputra* and east of the Chutia kingdom claimed that they were the descendents of Samudra, the minister of Arimatta. But the *charita puthis* depicted the *Bhuiyans* as *Kayastha* by caste invited to Kamarupa-Kamata by Durlabha Narayan. On the request of *Kamesvar* Durlabha Narayan, Dharma-Narayan (the *Gaudesvar*) sent 7 families of *Kayastha* from Kanauj, who gradually settled in Kamarupa under the leadership of Chandibar. Chandibar was in the position to oppose the *Kamesvar*. Lakhinath Bejbarua: *Sankardeva*, (Calcutta, 1926); p.5. E.A. Gait: *op.cit.*, p.39. *Darang Raj Vamsabali* depicts the multi-caste identity of the *Bhuiyans*, particularly as *Brahmin, Kayasth and Daivagna*. vs. 90-91.
90. *Guru Charita*: vs 192-210, pp.40-43.

91. *Darang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 89-97, pp.15-19, vs.118-122, pp.21-23.
92. *Riyazu-s-Salatin*, p.132.
93. Maheswar Neog: *Sankardeva and His Time*, (Gauhati, Gauhati University, 1965), p.52.
94. *Riyazu-s-Satatin*, p.133.
95. *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.10; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, p.127; *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 51-52, p.9.
96. *Kharga Narayanar Vamsaali*, Ms.f.7, cited in Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed: *op.cit.*, p.82
97. *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.10; *Deodhai Asam Buranji*, p.127;
98. *Ibid.*, pp.1-11.
99. Bhabesh Narzi: *Bodo Kacharir Swamaj aru Sanaskriti*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.,(Guwahati, Bina Library , 2001), p.23.
100. The Rabhas, who claimed their identity equivalent to the Koches, are basically matrilineal which is still exists among the Rabhas of West Bengal, Assam and Meghalay.
101. N.N. Vasu: *Social History of Kamrupa*, (3 vols.), reprint ed., (Delhi, 1983). *Vol. II*, p.38.
102. *Rajopakhyan*, p.14.
103. *Ibid.*
104. D. Nath: *History of the Koch Kingdom*, p.23.
105. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed:*op.cit.*, p.88.
106. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 90-93, p.16, vs. 118-121, pp.21-22.
107. *Ibid.*, vs. 125-131, pp.23-26.
108. J.P. Wade: *An Account of Assam* (1800), edited by Benudhar Sharma (Lakhimpur, 1927), pp.186-189.
109. *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp.14-21.
110. *Ibid.* ,p 28; *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.11
111. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 201-206, pp.14-42.
112. Bar Uzir was identified with Rukanuddin, one general of Alauddin Hussain Shah. S.N. Bhattacharyya: *op.cit.*, p.86.

115. Jadunath Sarkar: *op.cit.*, p.158; S.N. Bhattacharyya:*op.cit.* pp.86-92; E.A. Gait: *op.cit.*, p.95.
116. *Deb Raja* was the head of the secular administration in Bhutan and **Dharma Raja** was the head of the religious administration and the supreme monarch in Bhutan.
117. *Self-tr.* from the *Rajopakhyan*, pp.15-16.
118. *Rajopakhyan*, p.16.
119. *Ibid.*
120. *Yoginitantra*, pt. I, ch. 13, v.15, p. 134.
121. For details see *supra Chapter VI*
122. *Rajopakhyan*, p.16.
123. Hingulabas has been identified with the present Mahakal Guri village, which is situated in Alipurduar Sub-division of Jalpaiguri District. This village is still dominated by the Koch (Rajbanshi) and Mech People.
124. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 207-08, p.42; Pitambar Siddhyanta Vagis: *Markandeya Purana, Ms.* (NBSL Ms. No.8), f.1; also. (N.B.S.L., ms. 58). f.78.

## Chapter IV

### The Koch Kingdom: Consolidation, Segmentation and Continuity.

Visvasimha's kingdom got the final task of transformation to a 'centralized and consolidated state system' with the beginning of rule of King Nara Narayan (Malladeva) in 1540 A.D.<sup>1</sup> Together with his brother Sukladhvaj (Chilarai), Nara Narayan continued the policy of aggressive warfare initiated by Visvasimha. But division of the kingdom between the successors of Nara Narayan and Chilarai and internecine strife between two branches eventually reduced the Koch territory. But the Koches of main branch (Cooch Behar) continued the warfare for its own defence against the Ahoms, Mughals and the Bhutense and maintained its independent status till 1772 A.D.

#### 4.1. Warfare and Territorial Formation.

In his lifetime Visvasimha distributed the offices of the state to his all sons.<sup>2</sup> Malladeva was elected as *Yubaraj* (king) and Sukladhvaj as the general of army. But they were engaged in Sanskrit studies in Benaras<sup>3</sup> while Visvasimha was in the deathbed. So Narasimha, eldest son of Visvasimha, had assumed the kingship. But he fled from the capital when Malladeva and Sukladhvaj got back from Benaras. Narasimha had been roaming for political shelter in Eastern Nepal which was under the control of tribal people and their polity came to be identified as Morung or Vijaypur.<sup>4</sup> Due to the matrimonial relations between Visvasimha and Nepal,<sup>5</sup> Narasimha got shelter in Morung. But Malladeva and Sukadhvaja defeated the army of Morung. Narasimha fled from Morung and eventually took shelter in Bhutan and established his control in certain tracts of Bhutan.<sup>6</sup> Internal dissension did not continue for a long time and Malladeva was coronate as Nara Narayan in 1540 A.D. and Sukladhvaja was appointed as military general.

Endangered territory of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley with a center of power at Kamatapur, a tribal militia and a rudimentary administration without regular income inherited by Nara Narayan essentially led the Koches to continue the warfare for the consolidation of the emerging state. So Nara Narayan and Chilarai had strengthened the Koch militia by modernizing and introducing new techniques and sections in the

army like - a standing army (although small in size), spies, elephantry, navy <sup>7</sup>. constructing forts <sup>8</sup> and developing the transport system<sup>9</sup>. The peasantry and the artisans of the kingdom were also brought under the state control to render military service as *paik*. By the *paik system*, an able-bodied man (*paik*) from peasantry and professional castes like- Teli (oilmen), Mali (gardeners), Dhoba (washer man), Kahar (palanquin bearer), Kamar (iron smith), Sonari (gold smith), Patni (boatmen) and Chamar (tanner): were allotted 3 *puras* (12 *bighas*) of rent- free land<sup>10</sup> in terms of rendering obligatory military service to the state particularly in times of requirement .It increased the strength of the Koch peasant-infantry to 425000.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Nara Narayan appointed few Rajput and Afghan soldiers in his militia for leading the infantry and cavalry.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, the tribal force was maintained as an essential part of the militia. Before any warfare, Nara Narayan had to host a grand dinner for the Kachari, Mech, Koch, Bhutia and other tribes of the northern bank of the *Brahmaputra*.<sup>13</sup> So, Nara Narayan and Chilarai resumed the aggressive warfare with this 'tribal peasant-militia'<sup>14</sup>.

#### 4.1.1. Aggressive Warfare

Emergence of the Ahom state in Upper Assam and its expansion towards the Lower Brahmaputra valley were the great hindrance for further growth and development of the Koch kingdom. So Ahom-Koch conflict was the 'inevitable outcome of inter-tribal contest for controlling the Eastern Brahmaputra valley from where other tribal states of Northeast India could be controlled easily'. Visvasimha did not get any success against the Ahoms rather he accepted the Ahom suzerainty. He advised his sons to continue the warfare against the Ahoms.<sup>15</sup> The Ahoms on the contrary, attacked the Koch territory at Sala in the south bank of the *Brahmaputra* in 1543 A.D.<sup>16</sup> Koch prince Dipa Singha, along with two Koch generals, named Hemadhar and Ramachandra were killed by the Ahoms in 1546 A.D.<sup>17</sup> So the Koches sent an organized invasion against the Ahoms in 1547 A.D. but suffered a heavy defeat and around 500 Koch soldiers were massacred.<sup>18</sup>

Nara Narayan, however, tried to establish good relations with the Ahoms by diplomatic means. So he sent a diplomatic mission headed by Satananda Karzi, Ramesvar Sharma, Dhuma Sardar, Udbhanda Chaonia and Shyamrai, in 1477 *Saka* (1555 A.D.) to the court of Ahom king, Sukhampha (1552-1603).<sup>19</sup> But the Ahoms

replied most harshly with instigating comments.<sup>20</sup> So a serious conflict broke out between these emerging states. The Koch naval fleet commanded by Tepu<sup>21</sup> and

**Table 4.1:** Warfare and resource collection by Nara Narayan and Chilarai.

State	Year	Result(s)	Condition of Treaty/ Amount of indemnity	First Installment
Ahom	1562-63	The Ahoms were defeated	60 elephants, 60 pieces of cloths, a large amount of gold and silver	60 elephants, 60 pieces of cloths and a large amount of gold and silver
Kachar	1564	Submission of Kachar	Annual tribute @70000 silver coins, 1000 gold coins and 60 elephants.	24 elephants and large amount of gold and silver.
Meitei	1564	Submission of Manipur.	Annual tribute @ Rs. 20000, 300 gold coins and 10 elephants	Rs. 20000, 10000 gold coins, 40 elephants
Jayantia	1564	The Koches installed a pro-Koch king in Jayantia.	Annual tribute @ 70 horses, Rs.10000, 1000 gold coins and 100 swords.	100 horses, Rs 10000, 1000 gold coins and 100 swords.
Tripura	After the Jayantia invasion	King was killed and the Koches installed a new king.	@ 9000 gold coins.	10000 silver coins, 100 gold coins and 30 war-horses.
Khairam		Submission.	@ Rs.15000, 900 gold coins, 50 horses and 30 elephants.	60 horses, 40 strong tuskers' .Rs 40000 and 1000 gold coins.
Dimrua		The king of Dimrua was defeated.	@Rs.7000.	-----
Sylhet		The king was killed and a new king was installed.	@300000 silver coins, 10000 gold coins, 100 elephants and 200 horses.	100 elephants, 180 horses, Rs300000 and 10000 gold coins.
Gauda	Chilarai was defeated	Chilarai was imprisoned and released later on	-----	-----
<b>Total@</b>			<b>First Installment.</b>	
Elephants: =260,			Elephants=264,	
Horses: =320,			Horses=370,	
Swords: =100,			Swords=100,	
Silver coins (Rs.): = 422000			Rupees=380000,	
Gold coins: =22200,			Gold coins =22100,Others = Valuable goods.	
Other: = Valuable goods.				

For his outstanding performance against the Ahoms Sukladvaj got the appellation 'Chilarai'. The Ahom king fled to the Charai Khorang hill and eventually proposed for peace by offering valuable gifts consisting 60 elephants, 4 pots of silver, 2 pots of gold and few pots of jwelleries.<sup>22</sup> The Koches agreed with the proposal of the Ahoms and kept few representatives of the Ahom King as hostages <sup>23</sup>. So the Koches established their supremacy over the most powerful enemies in the eastern frontier.

The victory over the Ahoms had opened a new chapter in the history of the aggressive warfare of the Koches. After the Ahoms, Chilarai was looking towards Kachar which was already sacked by the Ahoms in 1535-36 A.D.<sup>24</sup> Chilarai with 52000 tribal army and other generals like- Bhimbai, Bahubai,<sup>25</sup> Rajendra Patra, Damodar Karzi and Megha Makdum<sup>26</sup> had proceeded towards Maibang, the capital of Kachar. While the Koch army halted at Marangi, the King of Kachar submitted to the Koches in 1564 A.D. with 28 elephants and large amount of gold and silver and agreed to pay Rs.7000, 1000 gold coin and 60 elephants to the Koches as annual tribute .<sup>27</sup> To confirm tribute in the subsequent years, Nara Narayan appointed Kamal Narayan, a Koch prince, as the *Dheyan/ Dhean* (governor) at Khaspur of Kachar<sup>28</sup>.The king of Kachar, however, enjoyed the political autonomy.

On hearing the success of the Koches against the Ahoms and the Kacharis, Ripu Singha (1561-1579 A.D.), the king of Manipur willingly surrendered to the Koches. He paid 20000 silver rupees, 1000 gold coins and 40 elephants to the Koches and Rupees 20000, 300 gold coins and 10 elephants had been fixed as the annual tribute <sup>29</sup>.

Unlike Kachar and Manipur, Jayantia king (Bargohain 1548-1564 A.D.) took the challenge of the Koches but was slain in the battlefield. The Koches installed a new king (Vijay Manik c1564-80) <sup>30</sup> in the throne of Jayantia who paid 1000 silver coins, 1000 gold coins, 100 horses and 100 swords. The *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* describes that the king of Jayantia was allowed the right of minting and enjoying political autonomy on the condition of paying annual tribute @ Rupees 10000, 1000 gold coins, 70 horses and 300 *Nakaidao* (knife) to the Koch king.<sup>31</sup>

Tripura, another tribal state of considerable strength, situated in the extreme corner of Northeast India, offered a serious challenge to the Koch invasion. The *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* claims that king of Tripura was slain and his brother

surrendered to the Koches and paid a tribute of Rs.1000, 100 gold coins and 30 horses. Tripura also agreed to pay 9000 gold coins as annual tribute.<sup>31</sup>

The chieftdom of Khairam centered in the Khasi-Jayantia hill with its capital at Nongkhreen near Shillong and headed by Viryavanta (*Raja*) had submitted to the Koch king with valuable gifts. The *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* narrates that the chief of Khairam was allowed the right of autonomy on the terms of payment of annual tribute to the Koches @ Rupees 15000, 900 gold coins, 50 horses and 30 elephants. He was, however, allowed to mint coins, bearing the name of Nara Narayan (Malladeva).<sup>33</sup>

The *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* also narrates the further invasions of Chilarai to Sylhet which was under the control of the Sultan of Bengal in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. As Sylhet denied the tribute claimed by Nara Narayan, Chilarai invaded Sylhet. Sylhet resist the Koch invasion but being defeated finally compelled to pay huge amount of silver rupees (Rs. 300000), gold coins, elephants and 180 horses to the Koches. The annual tribute was also very high.<sup>34</sup> On their way back from Sylhet, the Koches also defeated a small chieftdom called Dimrua. The king was imprisoned and finally released.

The continuity of 'warfare' with tribal militia under the commandership of Chilarai resulted into the expansion of Koch territory in the east and southeast of the kingdom inherited from Visvasimha. The collection of indemnity of total Rs.380000, 22100 gold coins, 264 elephants, 370 horses and other valuable goods considerably encouraged the warfare of the tribal state and fattened the treasury (*bhandar*) of the state. As in the initial stage, 'the only source of income of the Koch kingdom' was booty, the first installment of total Rs.380000 had significantly contributed to the economic development of the Koch kingdom. Role of 'tribal peasant militia' and local help, rendered by the cognate tribes eventually confirmed an annual tribute of Rs.422000, 22200 gold coins, 320 horses, 260 elephants and other valuable goods for the Koches. It accelerated their state formation process. As a whole 'aggressive warfare against the tribal states of Northeast India, theoretically proves the importance of warfare as a major dynamic of state formation.'

#### **4.1.2. Defensive Warfare**

Nara Narayan did not provincialise the conquered territories. On the contrary, the Koches did not have sufficient standing army to provincilize the conquered territories.

So the questions of defence of the conquered territories and consolidation of the kingdom had motivated the Koches to move towards defensive warfare against the probable and traditional aggressors, i.e. the Ahoms and Bengal.

The Afghans and the Mughals of Bengal did not tolerate the emergence of a tribal power under the Koches just in the immediate proximity of Bengal. Sulaiman Karrani, the Afghan Sultan of Bengal (1565-72 A.D.), after conquering Orissa (1567-68),<sup>35</sup> marched towards the Koch kingdom and reached as far as Koch capital but got back to his own capital at Tanda without permanent political result.<sup>36</sup> The Koch chronicles and the genealogies on the contrary, have narrated that Chilarai invaded Bengal and in spite of his outstanding performance he was defeated and imprisoned by the Sultan and eventually released.<sup>37</sup> This defeat of the Koches had instigated the Sultan of Bengal for further invasions to Tista-Brahmaputra valley. And it was under the commandship of Kalapahar, the Sultani army invaded Brahmaputra valley and devastated the temples of Hajo and Kamakshya and got back to Bengal without permanent political result.<sup>38</sup> This conflict eventually compelled Nara Narayan to change the aggressive warfare into a defensive one. Even Chilarai (from the jail of Bengal) had instructed Nara Narayan to form a defensive alliance with the Ahoms.<sup>39</sup>

**Table 4.2:** Defensive warfare and defensive alliances of Nara Narayan.

State	Year(s)	Relation(s)	Consequence(s)
Sultan of Bengal	1565-68 A.D.	The Afghans defeated the Koches.	It broke the traditions of aggressive warfare of the Koches.
Ahom	1565-70 A.D.	The Koches tried to establish a friendly terms with the Ahoms after their defeat in Bengal.	Koch attitude towards the Ahom became defensive.
Mughal	1574-87 A.D.	A treaty of friendship was concluded between the Koches and the Mughals.	It was the beginning of the Mughal hegemony in the Koch politics.

Realizing the hostility of Bengal and weak defence of the Koch territory, Nara Narayan released the hostages of the Ahoms<sup>40</sup> taken after the victory of the Koches 1563 A.D.<sup>41</sup> The Ahoms, on the contrary, began to re-conquer their lost territories from the Koches. However, the Koches renewed the warfare. But the Ahoms successfully repulsed the Koch naval attack commanded by Tepu and captured Mahun Laskar, Koch naval officer (*Barua*).<sup>42</sup> So Nara Narayan did not continue the aggressive

warfare against the Ahoms: He merely wanted the defence of his own territory from the further inroads of the Ahoms.

The establishment of the Mughal supremacy in Bengal in 1576 A.D.<sup>43</sup> was a new development in the southwestern proximity of the Koch state. The Mughals with their aggressive design in Northeast India first came into contact with the Koches. The Koches, instead of aggressive warfare took moderate and pragmatic view towards the Mughals i.e. 'friendly relation'. First step of the Koch-Mughal friendship was the refusal of the Koches to provide political shelter to the Afghan rebels in 1574 A.D..<sup>44</sup> Friendly attitude between the Koches and the Mughals turns into a 'defensive alliance' since 1578 A.D.<sup>45</sup> The Koch chronicles and genealogies categorically mentioned that a defensive agreement was concluded formally between Nara Narayan and the Mughal Emperor Akbar.<sup>46</sup> But the Persian source has constructed this relationship with a different version that Nara Narayan sent a formal mission with valuable gifts to the court of Akbar in 1578 A.D.<sup>47</sup> Again Nara Narayan did cooperate with the Mughals in 1583 in quelling the Afghan rising in the vicinity of Mughal-Koch frontier.<sup>48</sup> It is often argued that Nara Narayan had accepted the Mughal vassalage<sup>49</sup> but the available sources do not prove the vassalage status of the Koches rather place them in equal footing with the Mughals. The Mughal-Koch understanding was essentially a defensive one<sup>50</sup> for both the parties.<sup>51</sup>

So the 'stage of aggressive warfare' of the Koches was transformed into a 'phase of defensive alliance' particularly after 1570 A.D. Territorially Koch kingdom rose to its zenith administered directly from the core area, comprising the whole Tista and Lower Brahmaputra valley, and had indirect influence over the Northeast Indian tribal states including Bhutan. But transition from 'aggressive warfare' to 'defensive alliance' had stopped the plunder of booty. Hence instead of collection of booty through warfare, the Koches proceeded to exploit the revenue from the internal domain to maintain the 'state system' that became more complicated and elaborate.

#### **4.2.Segmentation**

Unlike the segmentary state,<sup>52</sup> the Koch kingdom became a centralized political entity without provinces and local zones and less capability of controlling the conquered territories. Hence, segmentation was inevitable, unless or until 'centrality is imposed from above' to the administrators of the conquered territories. Kamal Narayan

(Gohain Kamal) who was appointed as *Dheyman* for taking care of the political affairs of Kachar and collecting tributes from the tribal states, practically became independent and established the Khaspur state which remained in existence till 1745.<sup>53</sup> Even before his death (1587 A.D.), Nara Narayan was compelled to divide the centralized kingdom into two separate branches. It opened the new phase in the state formation process of the Koches which eventually resulted into the gradual decrement of the territories and establishment of Mughal-Ahom hegemony over the Koch state.

#### 4.2.1. Division of the State

The genealogies, chronicles and the Persian works have categorically described the division of the Koches during the last decade of the reign of Nara Narayan. These sources claim that Nara Narayan remained childless for a longtime due to his late marriage<sup>54</sup> and Raghudeva Narayan, son of Chilarai was chosen as the heir apparent or *Patkumar*.<sup>55</sup> But with the birth of Lakshmi Narayan and being instigated by the kinsmen and some bureaucrats of Nara Narayan, Raghudeva decided to stay at Ghila Vijaypur (Barnagar)<sup>56</sup> and declared him as the ruler of the eastern part of the Koch kingdom. Nara Narayan tried to pacify him but by no means Raghudeva was willing to return. Realizing the contemporary political situation of Northeast India Nara Narayan eventually granted the territories, marked by the *Sankosh* river in the west to the eastern most corner<sup>57</sup> to Raghudeva in 1581 A.D.<sup>58</sup> This division of the kingdom marked the beginning of internecine strife between the eastern part or Kamarupa or Koch-Hajo (Eastern Koch kingdom) and western part or Kamata or Cooch Behar (main branch).<sup>59</sup>

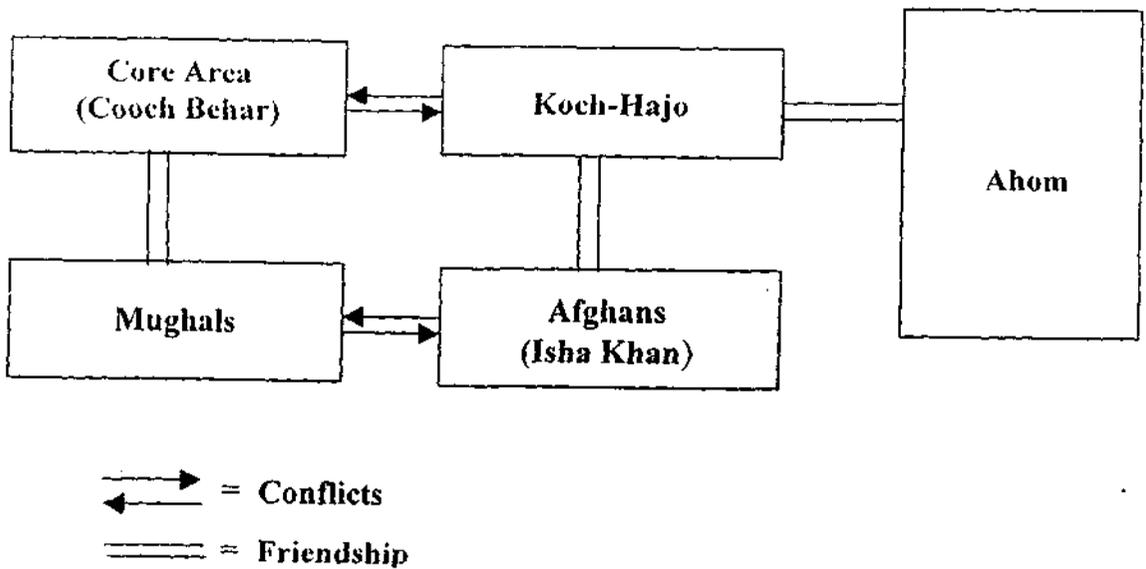
#### 4.2.2. Beginning of Intra-Koch Conflicts.

Raghudeva Narayan although acknowledged the supremacy of Nara Narayan<sup>80</sup> but when Lakshmi Narayan became the king of Cooch Behar in 1587A.D., he placed himself as the independent king of Koch-Hajo or Kamarupa. 'Two branches' now began to attack each other in order to establish single power hegemony.

Intra-Koch conflicts had allured Isha Khan, a *Zamindar* of considerable strength of Bhati to attack the territory of Raghudev lying south of the *Brahmaputra*<sup>61</sup>. But eventually a peace was established between them. It was essential for both the parties. At the same time Isha Khan was a sleepless enemy of the Mughal power of Bengal. Being afraid of Mughal expansion he needed an alliance with such a power that could

be the natural enemy of the Mughals. Defensive alliance between Cooch Behar and the Mughals had placed Raghudeva as the natural enemy. Raghudeva on the other hand, wanted to destroy the power of Lakshmi Narayan for which he formed an alliance with Isha Khan<sup>62</sup>. It compelled Lakshmi Narayan to establish a deep relation with the Mughals. Lakshmi Narayan, by offering his sister to Man Singh, the governor of Bengal, and his personal submission to the Mughal in 1596<sup>63</sup> secured the Mughal assistance <sup>64</sup>against the alliances of Raghudeva Narayan and the Afghans. So the policy of 'defensive alliance' perused by Nara Narayan turns into a subordination of the Koches and intra-Koch conflicts now crossed the regional boundary and involved two other mutually conflicting powers of Bengal.

Figure 4.1: The Tista-Brahmaputra valley in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.



Good terms with Isha Khan had instigated Raghudeva to attack Bhitambar, <sup>65</sup> most coveted region of the core area of the Koches, which was captured by him in 1597 A.D. This success of Raghudeva led him to attack Lakshmi Narayan. But Lakshmi Narayan with the Mughal help defeated Raghudeva <sup>66</sup> and brought his royal insignia to Cooch Behar<sup>67</sup>. At the same time Isha Khan, after some initial success against the Mughals and the Koches in 1597 eventually submitted to the Mughal Emperor Akbar <sup>68</sup> and died in 1599 A.D.

Being isolated and friendless Raghudeva now shifted his attention towards the Ahoms for continuing enmity with Lakshmi Narayan. He offered his daughter Mangaldai <sup>69</sup> to Pratap Singha (1603-1641 A.D.), King of the Ahoms, by which

Raghudeva secured the assistance of the Ahoms against Lakshmi Narayan backed by the Mughals. But this attempt of Raghudeva Narayan had opened the road of future encroachment of the Ahoms.

Parikshit Narayan became the king of Koch-Hajo after the death of Raghudeva Narayan in 1603 A.D. and ensued the rivalry with Lakshmi Narayan. Parikshit Narayan attacked Bahirband<sup>70</sup> which eventually placed the two branches of the Koches into a direct confrontation. Lakshmi Narayan was defeated by Parikshit<sup>71</sup> and compelled to return the royal insignia<sup>72</sup> brought earlier from Raghudeva Narayan. Thus Lakshmi Narayan personally submitted in 1609 to Islam Khan, governor of Bengal<sup>73</sup>, to secure the Mughal support against Parikshit Narayan. It confirmed Mughal assistance but Lakshmi Narayan's political status was reduced to a vassal from a sovereign ruler. It also placed Koch-Hajo as a closer enemy of the Mughals.

Parikshit Narayan now attacked by two immediate neighbors i.e. Mughal and Lakshmi Narayan. Islam Khan sent an expedition against Parikshit Narayan under the commandship of Mukhram Khan who was accompanied by the Raja of Sushung<sup>74</sup>. Parikshit Narayan got some success against the Mughals but lost the Dhubri fort to them.<sup>75</sup> Parikshit Naryan finally agreed to conclude a peace proposed by the Mughals. He offered a lucrative gift to Shaykh Kamal, a Mughal general and agreed to pay a huge tribute of Rs.300000, 300 elephants, 300 *tangan* horses to the Mughals.<sup>76</sup> But Islam Khan did not ratify the terms of the peace because he wanted the personal submission of Parikshit Narayan to Jahangir, the Mughal Emperor.<sup>77</sup> So hostilities broke out once again. The Mughals and Lakshmi Narayan conjointly attacked Dhubri and Khuntaghat respectively, two important strategic points of Parikshit Narayan. Parikshit fled to Pandu and finally surrendered to the Mughals in 1612 A.D.<sup>78</sup> Thus southern part of Koch-Hajo became a part of the Mughal Empire. At the same time Bali Naryan, brother of Parikshit Narayan, fled to the Ahom territories and subsequently became a tributary ruler of Darrang under their protection<sup>79</sup>. So the Ahom hegemony was established in the northern part of the Eastern Koch kingdom.

For the continuity of the intra-Koch conflicts, Koch kingdom was reduced to a small territory, extended from the *Tista-Karatoya* to the *Sankosh* including some portion of Dhubri. Lakshmi Narayan although got rid from the intra-Koch conflicts but 'lost his entity as an independent king'. Both Lakshmi Narayan and Parikshit Narayan

were taken to Dacca and thence to the imperial capital of the Mughal where they were confined for few years. Parikshit agreed to pay Rs.700000 as war indemnity to Jahangir<sup>80</sup> and return to Dacca in 1617. But Ibrahim Khan Fatejang, governor of Bengal, did not agree with the emperor and again Parikshit was sent to Delhi<sup>81</sup>. Eventually Parikshit Narayan managed to release from the Mughal court but on his way to Koch Kingdom he died at the bank of the *Ganges*, near Allahabad (1618 A.D.)<sup>82</sup>. Lakshmi Narayan was also allowed to return from the imperial court in 1618 A.D. after exchanging certain gifts.<sup>83</sup> He maintained the relationships with the Mughals as an obedient vassal<sup>84</sup> that was followed by the next Koch king, Bir Narayan (1627-32 A.D.).

#### 4.2.3. Consequences of the Intra-Koch Conflicts.

Intra-Koch conflict eventually resulted into the loss of eastern Koch kingdom to the Mughals and the Ahoms. On the other hand, the Koches of the main branch were demoted to the vassalage of the Mughals for few years particularly up to 1632 A.D. having political autonomy and certain other requisite of an independent state.

It is very difficult to determine the exact amount of annual tribute paid by the Koches to the Mughal court. The *buranjis* mentioned that Parikshit Narayan was agreed to pay Rs.700000<sup>85</sup> and with other subsidiary goods per annum which, however, did not transform into practice. But regarding Lakshmi Narayan did neither the local sources nor the Persian works mention the exact amount. The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, a Persian work of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, merely mentions that Lakshmi Narayan offered a suitable *peshkash* (tribute)<sup>86</sup> to Islam Khan, the Mughal governor of Bengal, and rendered military services to the Mughals in times of their war against Parikshit Narayan. Occasional payment of 500 *muhars* as gift to Jahangir in 1618 A.D.<sup>87</sup> cannot be counted as annual tribute. However, the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* recorded that after 1618 A.D. Lakshmi Narayan's *peshkash* payable to the Mughals was Rs.100000.<sup>88</sup> But this source does not highlight any point about the fixed rate of annual tribute. Contrarily, military service rendered by Lakshmi Narayan was the primary cost of the subordinate alliances with the Mughals.

Historical works on the Koches. done so far have over-emphasized the vassalage status of the Koches due to the disappearance of the centrality in the Koch kingdom.<sup>89</sup> But maintenance of the vast army for both serving the Mughals and protection of the

kingdom, occasional payment of tribute and with the continuity of certain traditions initiated by the early Koch kings; had stimulated the Koch state to search for more alternatives for its existence. In the absence of Lakshmi Narayan in capital, the prince (*Patkumar*) handled the administration of the state for several years. Even after his return from the Mughal court, Lakshmi Narayan had been in the charge of administration of Mughal occupied Koch-Hajo for pacifying the anti-Mughal sentiments of the subjects of that land<sup>90</sup>. The *Patkumar* continued the rule from the capital. Stephen Cacella, a Jesuit traveler, found the Prince (*Gobursa*) as the ruler of Cooch Behar during his visit to Koch kingdom in 1627 A.D..<sup>91</sup> So the Koch kingdom witnessed a parallel rule from two centers and obviously for two opposite purposes which was however, not identical with the segmentary state system.

### **4.3. Internal Strife and Pressure from Outside.**

A new phase in the process of state formation of the Koches had been started with the accession of Prana Narayan as king Cooch Behar in 1632 A.D..<sup>92</sup> The Koch state began to revive its political status under his leadership because he resumed the aggressive warfare and made new administrative arrangements to cope with the contemporary situation. But it led the beginning of another stage of encroachment of the Mughals, Ahoms and Bhutan.

#### **4.3.1. Koch -Mughal and the Koch-Ahom Conflicts.**

Prana Narayan being an ambitious Koch king (1632-1665) was determined to restore the prosperity of kingdom. Thus he looks towards former Eastern Koch kingdom where Bali Narayan, a feudatory king of Darrang, had been fighting against the Mughals till his death in 1638 A.D.. The anti-Mughal warfare was continued by his son Chandra Narayan with the assistance of the Ahoms.<sup>93</sup> Mughal occupation in Kamarupa and their conflicts with the Ahoms<sup>94</sup> did not permit Prana Narayan to make any agreement with the Ahoms against the Mughals. Rather, the bondage of military service to the Mughals and contemporary situation of Northeastern India had compelled Prana Narayan to cooperate with the Mughals in their Assam campaign in 1637 A.D. But the Ahoms defeated the Mughals in 1638 and eventually both the parties concluded a peace in 1639 A.D.. The Ahom had formally accepted the Mughal authority in Kamarupa while Ahom supremacy was also recognized in the territories occupied by them and they moved towards establishing a commercial relation.<sup>95</sup> So

Prana Narayan also tried to make a good relation with the Ahoms through diplomatic means <sup>96</sup>.

Prana Narayan, however, got an opportunity to curve the Mughal pressure when Mughal empire was suffering from a 'fratricidal struggle among the successors of Shah Jahan' in 1657 A.D.. Shah Sujah, viceroy of Bengal, by leaving the Mughal-Koch frontier unprotected, had set out to participate in the 'contest for the throne of the Mughal Empire'. This opportunity had strengthened the position of Prana Narayan for which he denied to pay *peshkash* to the Mughals and he attacked the Mughal controlled territories.<sup>97</sup> Ghoraghat, an important center of contemporary politics, and the Dinajpur-Raj were regular victims of his aggression.<sup>98</sup>

Prana Narayan's aggression was more diplomatic than the early Koch rulers. In order to re-conquer the former Koch-Hajo (now Mughal controlled territories), he sent a mission to Durlabha Narayan, the Koch Zamindar of Budhanagar and a vassal of the Mughals, with a request to expel the Mughals from his ancestral kingdom by joining him. However, Durlabh Narayan refused this proposal and remained faithful to the Mughals. Thus Prana Narayan sent a troop commanded by Bhaba Nath Karzi <sup>99</sup> who occupied the territories of Durlabh Narayan. Durlabh Narayan took shelter to the Ahom king, Jayadhaja Singha (1651-1665 A.D.). <sup>100</sup> This triumph of Prana Narayan revived the old policy of aggressive warfare of the Koches.

Mir Lutfulla, Mughal *faujdar* (commander) at Guwahati, had tried to check the advancement of Bhabanath Karzi towards Hajo. But Bhabanath Karzi easily recaptured Hajo, another important center of Northeast India's contemporary politics<sup>101</sup>. Prana Narayan now requested the Ahom king, Jayadhaja Singha to pressurize over the Mughal commandants to evacuate Assam.<sup>102</sup> So Being afraid of conjoint attack of the Koches and the Ahoms, the Mughal *faujdar* fled to Jahangirnagar (Dacca) in 1658 A.D.<sup>103</sup>

Flight of the Mughal commandants from Pandu and Ghoraghat enabled the Ahoms to capture Guwahati without trouble. But it became a direct challenge for further advancement of Prana Narayan to the Brahmaputra valley. Peaceful negotiations of Prana Narayan was cancelled by the Ahoms on the ground that the Koches did not support the Ahoms in their conflicts with the Mughals in the 1630's.<sup>104</sup> So the Koch-Ahom conflicts became inevitable. The Ahoms defeated Bhabanath Karzi

and his son, Aniruddha Karzi fell in the battlefield. The Ahoms now advanced as far as the *Sankosh* in the west <sup>105</sup> and placed the kinsman of the ruling family of Koch-Hajo as the feudatory chiefs of different places of the Brahmaputra valley under their protégé. Chandra Narayan, grandchild of Parikshit Narayan, was placed at Ghila Vijaypur, the former capital of Raghudeva Narayan. Durlabh Narayan was appointed as the administrator for a part of Beltola and Gandharbha Narayan, son of Bir Narayan was given Beltola under the Ahom protection by 1659 A.D. <sup>106</sup> This advancement of the Ahoms as far as the *Sankosh*, the western boundary of former Koch-Hajo, and feudatory arrangements with the successors of Parikshit Narayan in the Brahmaputra valley had stopped the possibility of reunification of the Koch kingdom under the leadership of Prana Narayan. Jay Narayan, a Koch *zamindar*, alone was motivated to establish a peaceful understanding between the Ahoms and the Koches but could not materialize it and compelled to leave his feudatory estate in 1659 A.D. <sup>107</sup>

So the aggressive warfare led by Prana Narayan in the Brahmaputra valley was a failure but it could not stop the continuity of warfare. Prana Narayan himself attacked the Mughal *faujdar* at Dhubri for which the Mughals left Dhubri. But the booties including Mughal arms and naval fleets plundered by the Koches could not be carried to Cooch Behar because the Ahom force immediately captured Dhubri including the plundered materials. <sup>108</sup> Prana Narayan, now compelled to return to his capital without economic incentives and diplomatic gains. 'His leadership could have united the Koches as a resistance force against the Mughals and the Ahoms but dispersed feudatory chiefs of the Koches of the Lower Brahmaputra valley had their tie-up with the Ahoms not with the independent of Koch state of the main branch'.

Prana Narayan could not enjoy the independent status for a long time. New Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb (1658-1707) had revived the Mughal imperialism in Northeast India. Mir Jumla, an ambitious and competent Mughal general, set out for Northeast India to reconquer the lost territories and confirm the vassalage of the Koches. He captured Cooch Behar in 1661 A.D. and reached as far as Yok Duar near the Bhutan frontier <sup>109</sup>. Prana Narayan fled from the capital and took shelter in Buxaduar, <sup>110</sup> a mountain pass to enter into Bhutan. The Mughals concluded a peace with Vishnu Narayan <sup>111</sup>, Prince of the kingdom. A gigantic amount was fixed as tribute <sup>112</sup> and administration had been left in charge of Isphandar Beg and Qazi

Samuisuja, two Mughal officials, with adequate military strength.<sup>113</sup> Mir Jumla's Cooch Behar campaign was, however, merely a disastrous episode for the Koches because Prana Narayan got down from Buxaduar and expelled the Mughals from his capital who were compelled to take shelter in Ghoraghat.<sup>114</sup>

*Fathiya-i-Ibriya*, a 17<sup>th</sup> century Persian work, clearly emphasizes that the inapplicability of 'Mughal revenue assessment' in Cooch Behar and antagonism of the peasantry were responsible for the unpopularity and easy expulsion of the Mughals.<sup>115</sup> It is to be noted that the Koches gradually established their hold over the peasantized economy of the plains of northern Bengal and had the control over the 'Indo-Bhutan hill trade' carried through the region which enabled the Koch kingdom to solidify its economic base even with moderate rate of land revenue. So the Mughal *jamabandi* (land revenue assessment of the Mughals) was not acceptable to the peasants of the Koch kingdom. At the same time the Mongoloid tribes of the Western Duars had their natural support to Prana Narayan. Moreover, Mir Jumla's sudden death in 1663 A.D. and futility of his Assam campaign had strengthened the position of the Koch king. However, Prana Narayan could not enjoy this situation for a long time. Shaistha Khan, new governor of Bengal, was convicted to re conquer Cooch Behar and other territories. But Prana Narayan preferred to avoid the direct conflict with the Mughals and agreed to pay an amount of Rs.550000 as indemnity, which was deposited to the Mughal court in 1665 A.D.<sup>116</sup>

So the Koches could not overthrow the alien control from their state inspite of Prana Narayana's best effort against the Mughals. But he was successful to maintain the territorial limit of the kingdom extended from Bhatgaon of Morung in the west to Khutaghat in the east and from Bhutan frontier to Tazhat and Baharband *parganas* in the south.<sup>117</sup>

Prana Narayan was succeeded by Moda Narayan (1665-1680 A.D.) who beared the bondage of vassalage by assisting the Mughals in their Assam campaign under the commandership of Ram Singh. Subsequent Koch rulers, like Mahindra Narayan (1682-1693 A.D.), Rup Narayan (1693-1714) and Upendra Narayan (1714-1763) had to face the frequent Mughal raids. These attacks were mostly motivated with the plunder, as the Mughal Empire had been suffering from an economic crisis in its internal domain

The Mughals, however, failed to subdue the Koch kingdom into a permanent feudatory state. Shaistha Khan was busy with the Mughal state affairs and there was no Mughal pressure to the Koches at least for two decades (1665-85 A.D.). But Mahindra Narayan's reign (1682-1693 A.D.) faced a Mughal attack which according to Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri, had 'compelled the Koches to surrender three *chaklas*, of Fatepur, Kajirhat and Kakina to the Mughals in 1687 A.D.'<sup>119</sup>. The Koch officials at Tapa, Manthena, Jhori and other Parganas of southern frontier of the state, taking the advantages of the internal dissensions and weaknesses of the central authority of the state, established tributary relationship with Bengal *subha* of the Mughals.<sup>120</sup> At the same time *Pargana* Boda, Patgram and Purbabhag were captured by Jabardast Khan, *Subhadar* (governor) of Bengal in 1711 A.D. But these territories were not annexed to the Mughal Empire. King Rup Narayan (1693-1714) had retained the possession of these *parganas* by paying a nominal amount of tribute. As it was considered derogatory to pay tribute by a King of an independent status, the lease of these *parganas* were taken in the name of *Nazir Deo* (commander-in-chief and head of the military affairs).<sup>121</sup> After a gap of two decades, being invited and instigated by Dina Narayan (the adopted son of the king), the Mughals attacked the Koch territory in 1737-1738 A.D. under the commandership of Muhammad Ali Khan, *fauzdar* of Rangpur. The defeat of the Koch army had compelled the king Upendra Narayan (1714-1765) to conclude an agreement with Bhutan which had already established her political hegemony over the Western Duars. With the help of the Bhutanese, the Koches compelled the Mughal force to leave the Koch territory forever<sup>122</sup>.

#### **4.3.2. Internal Dissention and Intervention of Bhutan (1676-1773 A.D.).**

Koch kingdom began to face a new challenge after the death of Prana Narayan as he could not check the pressure from outside. Along with it, internal feuds gradually placed the state in a stage of continuous struggle between the bifurcated power centers, the king and the important state officials. So further changes were inevitable in the state politics. *Chatra Nazir/Nazir Deo*, *Dewan Deo/Dewan* (head of the civil administration) and *Raikat* (who in the beginning was the frontier guard and the first authority in the installation of the new king with full responsibilities of defence of the state but now independent *zamindar*) were the three offices which came forward to

establish their respective authority over the kingdom which was endangered with the occasional Mughal raids and increasing Bhutanese influence.

The *Raikat* of Baikunthapur practically became independent from the Koch state affairs from the reign of Bir Narayan (c1626-32 A.D). Even he broke the compulsory tradition of holding royal umbrella (*chhatra*) over the new king. Hence, Mahi Narayan, the then *Nazir*, was placed as the alternative of the *Raikat* and for holding the *chhatra* on the occasion of coronations of Bir Narayan and Prana Narayan; he came to be designated as *Chhatra Nazir*<sup>123</sup>. It made him a significant center of power with the leadership in military affairs for which he became a challenge for authority of the king. On the other hand, *Raikat* got the chance to detach his responsibility from the state and paid more attention for its own territorial interest. *Dewan Deo*, taking the minority of the king also came forward to participate in the struggle for power.

Internal conflicts within the state had been started since the last years of the reign of King Prana Narayan. The *Chhatra Nazir* (Mahi Narayan) after hearing the news of illness of the king, reached to the capital and killed two *mantris* (ministers) of the state.<sup>124</sup> But after the death of Prana Narayan (1665), four sons of the said *Nazir* tried each his best to become the king. Realising the possibility of more enhancement of internal conflicts among his sons, the *Nazir* installed Moda Narayan, second son of Prana Narayan; as the Koch king (1665-1680). But Mahi Narayan as *Nazir* and his sons as the kinsman of the *Nazir* had established their control over the militia and civil administration. However, Moda Narayan somehow managed a section of the army in his favour and killed one trouble-creating son of the *Nazir*. The *Nazir* fled from Cooch Behar and had been roaming as *gossain* (mendicant) in different places of the state and eventually was killed at the territory of the *Raikat*. However, Darpa Narayan and Jagna Narayan, two sons of the *Nazir*, with other relatives took shelter in Bhutan. With the Bhutanese help they tried to control the state affairs particularly after the death of Moda Narayan in 1680 A.D. But the sons of Mahi Narayan again began to fight among themselves for the throne<sup>125</sup>. In such a situation Bhutan plundered the capital of the Koches and carried the *hanuman danda* (royal scepter), *chhatra* (royal umbrella) and other royal insignias to Butan.<sup>126</sup> This was the first time that the Bhutanese had intervened over the Koch kingdom.

In such a critical situation, the *Raikat* was invited to install the new king. *Raikat* brothers Jagna Deva and Bhuj Deva reached to the capital at their earliest and had installed Vasudeva Narayan, only surviving son of Prana Narayan, as the new king (1680-1682 A.D.). The *Raikat* revived the tradition of holding *chhatra* over the head of the new king and proved his role in the state making process. But it was a pause of two years only. Once again Jagna Narayan comes down from the hills of Bhutan and with the Bhutanese assistance he killed the king in 1662 A.D.<sup>127</sup> So the conflict between the *Raikat* and the *Nazir* was almost inevitable. The *Raikat* had installed Mahindra Narayan as the Koch king (1682-1693 A.D.) and checked the ambition of Jagna Narayan. But the *Raikat* could not curtail the influence of Jagna Narayan. Even he was appointed as the *Chhatra Nazir* because of his good terms with Bhutan as Bhutanese assistance was almost essential for the kingdom to check the Mughal raids of 1780's as mentioned earlier.

After the death of Jagna Narayan, his nephew Shanta Narayan was appointed as the *Chhatra Nazir* and Satya Narayan was appointed as *Dewan*<sup>128</sup>. They became so powerful that after the death of Mahindra Narayan they installed Rup Narayan, a member of the family of the *Nazir*, as king (1693-1714) for the Koch throne. The *Raikat* resented<sup>129</sup> this arrangement but he failed to cancel it. At the same time, the *Raikat* was worried about the Mughals of Bengal with whom he had already concluded an agreement in 1687 A.D. to pay annual tribute for enjoying his land.<sup>130</sup> Thus the contest of supremacy between two centers of the state affairs to control the king eventually ended with the success of the family of the *Chhatra Nazir*. The *Raikat* now practically became isolated from the main state politics.

The *Dewan*, another office of the state affair, became a powerful center of politics during the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. While the *Nazir* and King Upendra Narayan (1714-63 A.D.) have conjointly proceeded to resist the Mughal invasion in 1737-38 A.D., *Dewan Deo* did not cooperate with them.<sup>131</sup> Again the *Dewan*, became the controller of the state affairs during the reign of Dharendra Narayan (1765-70 A.D.). No step could be taken without the consent of the *Dewan*. But the king murdered the *Dewan*, which initiated a new phase in the process of state formation.

Internal struggle for kingship and other important offices of the state in the 18<sup>th</sup> century had weakened the prestige of the Koch king and the authority of the state

politics was decentralized into three centers, viz, the state capital, Balarampur (main office of *Nazir* or military affairs) and Baramkhana (the resident of the *Dewan*).<sup>132</sup> Both the *Nazir* and *Dewan* had nominal offices in the capital. Moreover, the revenue was also tripartite. *Nazir* himself taken the possession of revenue produced in Mathabhanga and Gitaldah *parganas* for the expenditure of the military department.<sup>133</sup> *Dewan* also had enjoyed land for its own expenditure.

In such a critical situation Bhutan initiated her aggression towards the Koch kingdom .It has already been observed that in the last quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century *Chhatra Nazir* had opened the road of easy access for Bhutan to Cooch Behar. The Bhutanese crossed the hilly region and extended their sway in the plains of present Jalpaiguri district particularly in Alipurduar Sub-Division during the reign of Upendra Narayan (1714-1763). It was not possible for the Koch king to check the Bhutanese encroachment as Upendra Narayan had expelled the Mughals from the Koch territory with their help<sup>134</sup>. Thus fear of the Mughals compelled the Koch king to bear the Bhutanese hegemony. Influence of Bhutan was so high that during the reign of Devendra Narayan (1763-65) Bhutan placed her representative in Cooch Behar with a garrison. Bhutan also enhanced her hegemony by introducing a tradition of annual ceremonial exchanges of gifts at Chechakhata of Buxaduar by which Bhutan used to get almost double from Cooch Behar what she offered to the Koches.<sup>135</sup>It was obligatory for Cooch Behar.

Direct confrontation between Bhutan and Cooch Behar begun in 1765 A.D. when King Debendra Narayan was killed (1665 A.D) by Ratikanta Sharma, a follower of the *Rajguru* (royal priest)<sup>136</sup>, Ramananda Gossain. Bhutan arrested Ramananda Gossain for this offence and executed him at Punakha and installed Pensu Toma as her representative in the Koch capital <sup>137</sup>. Bhutan also annexed Jalpesvar, Mandas and other territories of present Malbazar Subdivision of Jalpaiguri district from the Koch kingdom during the period between 1765-1770.<sup>138</sup>

But most disastrous fate was waiting for Cooch Behar. When the king murdered Ram Narayan, *Dewan* favoured by Bhutan, Bhutan took immediate steps and had taken king Dharendra Narayan (1765-1770 A.D. & 1775-83 A.D.) and new *Dewan* (Surendra Narayan) as captive to Bhutan in 1770 A.D. A new king, Rajendra Narayan (1770-1772 A.D) was installed by them <sup>139</sup>. Pensu Toma, with the Bhutanese force,

became the practical ruler of the kingdom. However, death of Rajendra Narayan in 1772 A.D. once again raised the question of selection of new king. Cooch Behar authority handled by *Nazir* and *Rajmata* (mother of the King) had coronet Dharendra Narayan in the throne (1772-75). Bhutan did not accept it and came down from the hill with a big force and captured the whole Cooch Behar except Rahimganj Pargana. Zimpe, Bhutanese general, had fortified the kingdom and installed Bijendra Narayan as the 'alternative Koch king' at Chechakhata.<sup>140</sup> Thus a parallel kingship was created in Cooch Behar for the intervention of Bhutan.

The *Nazir* and other Koch officer found that it is not possible for them to expel the Bhutanese from Cooch Behar without external help. Accordingly, after a long negotiation with the East India Company, the **Anglo-Cooch Behar Treaty** was concluded in 1773 A.D. by which Cooch Behar accepted the feudatory status.<sup>141</sup> Although the Bhutanese were expelled from Cooch Behar but this treaty eventually established British control over the Koch kingdom and since then Cooch Behar enjoyed the 'Native State' status to the end of the British rule in India.

#### 4.4. Observations.

The foregoing description on the Koch kingdom reveals that the consolidation of the kingdom was rested on the warfare of both 'aggressive' and 'defensive' categories. Leadership of the king in the warfare appears as the essential requisite of state formation. The territories conquered by the Koches were, however, not provincialised. On the contrary, it created the situation of the internal conflicts. So contest with similar aggressive powers and the internal struggle had entangled the kingdom in a stage of ceaseless warfare till the last day of its independence. Formation of defensive alliances and taking military assistance from the neighbours were also common in the kingdom. Although the Koches lost their conquered territories to the dominant neighbours but maintained its independence till 1772 A.D.

#### Notes and References.

1. The date of Nara Narayan's accession is debatable. But the year 1540 A.D. has been accepted by most of the scholars as the date of his coronation.

2. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 255-264, pp.50-52.
3. *Ibid.*, vs. 285-291, pp. 59-60.
4. Iman Singh Chemjong: *History and Culture of the Kirata People*, (2 vols.), 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.,(Kathmandu, Nepal Printing Press, 1967), vol.II, p.88; also, Raja Ram Subedi and Durga Parajali: *Historical Entity of Vijaypur State*, (Seminar paper presented in the International Seminar on 'North Bengal Throughout the Ages', April 8-10, 2004, Maldah, West Bengal), p.2.
5. Visvasimha had 18 wives from different castes and kingdoms of Northern and Northeast India. Queen Ratnakanti (from Nepal) was Narasimha's mother. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali.*, v. 231, p.46, v.240, p. 48.
6. *Ibid.*, vs. 295-301, pp. 60-63.
7. Koch navy was small in size and did not have more than 1000 war boats .The navy was placed under a *Barua* (officer).
8. A Fort was constructed at Narayanpur at the Ahom-Koch frontier. Unlike the pre-Koch rulers of Kamarupa-Kamata, the Koches did not construct big forts. But the **Chilarai Kote** (fort built by Chilarai at Tufanganj) was considerably big in size, which has been now perished. After the partition of India in 1947 the East Bengali refugees have been given rehabilitation in the area of the *Kote*.
9. At the instance of Nara Narayan, Gohain Kamal constructed a road (*Gohain Kamal Ali*) extended from the Koch capital to Narayanpur fort for the easy movement of the militia.
10. *Raja Vamsavali*, Ms. (N.B.S.L. Ms.no.4), f. 9.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.
12. *Rajopakhyan*, p.20.
13. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 327-338, pp. 66-68.
14. For details about the route of invasion led by Nara Narayan and Chilarai, see Map 2.
15. *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.11; *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, v.266, p.42.
16. S.K.Bhuyan(ed): *Assam Buranji or Sri Sri Swarga Narayandev Maharajar Janma Charita*, reprint ed., (Gauhati, DHAS, 1960), pp.25, 29.
17. *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 30-31.

18. S.K.Datta(ed): *Assam Buranji (1668-1681)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Guwahati, DHAS, 1991), henceforth *Assam Buranji (1668-1680)*, p.25.
19. Cited in Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed: *Koch Bihar Itihas, vol.1*, (Cooch Behar, The Cooch Behar State Press, 1936), p. 104; also *Historical Letters of the Ahom Period: A Collection of 44 Letters Exchanged between the Koch and the Ahom Kings*, Transcript No.18, vol. V, Part-VI, DHAS.
20. The letters exchanged between the Ahom king and Nara Narayan have been reproduced in different works .For example, see Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed :*op.cit.*, p.155.
21. *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, p.34.
22. *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 34-35; *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs.362-363, p.73.
23. Hem Chandra Goswami (ed): *Purani Assam Buranji*, reprinted., (Guwahati, Lawyears Book Stall,1977),henceforth *Purani Assam uranji* , p.52.
24. *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp.17-22.
25. Upendra Chandra Guha: *Kacharer Itibritta*.,reprint ed.,(Gauhati, Assam Prakashan Parishad ,1971), pp. 29-30.
26. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, v. 390, p.78.
27. *Ibid.*, vs. 397-403, pp. 79-81.
28. Upendra Chandra Guha: *op.cit.*, p.31.
29. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 405-09, p. 82-83.
30. E.A.Gait: *A History of Assam*, p. 313.
31. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 415-420, pp. 84-86.
32. *Ibid.*, vs. 424-429, p.86-87.
33. *Ibid vs*432-439, pp. 88-89.
34. *Ibid*, vs. 468-486, p. 96-100.
35. R.C. Majumdar: *History of Medieval Bengal*,(Calcutta, G.Bharadwaj &Co., 1973), pp.73-74.
36. *Riyazu-s-Salatin*, p.152.
37. *Kamrupar Buranji*, pp.12-13; *Purani Assam Buranji*, p.52.; *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 496-507 and vs. 531-534, pp. 102-104, 108-109.
38. R.C.Majumdar: *op.cit.*, p.74; *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* , v.542, p110 ; *Rajopakhyan* p.23.

39. *Purani Assam Buranji*, p.52.
40. *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, p.36.
41. *Purani Assam Buranji*, p.52.
42. *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp.37-38.
43. S.N. Bhattacharyya: *A History of Mughal Northeast Frontier Policy*, reprint ed.,(Calcutta, 1994), p.94; R.C. Majumdar: *op.cit.*, p.79.
44. S.N.Bhattacharyya :*Ibid.*, p.96.
45. *Ibid.*, pp.97-99.
46. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 565-85, pp.115-119.
47. S.N.Bhattacharyya :*op.cit.*,p. 97.
48. *Ibid.*, P. 103.
49. Charles Stewart: *The History of Bengal*, reprint, ed., (Delhi, Oriental Publishers, 1971), p.166.
50. S.N. Bhattacharyya: *op.cit.*, p.98.
51. Continuity of Afghan rising in Bengal after the fall of Daud Karrani in 1576 A.D., had provoked the Mughals to maintain a friendly terms with the Koches because there was every opportunity for the Afghan to utilize the Koch territory against the Mughals. At the same time the Afghans were the most powerful enemy of Koches as the Afghans defeated them. So the Koches realized that establishment of a new power in Bengal is stronger than the former one. Hence defensive attitude was quite natural.
52. Segmentary state had several political domains with autonomy and authority of coercive power but sovereignty remained to the king. The medieval South Indian states had been identified as the segmentary state system. Burton Stain: *The Segmentary state: Interim Reflection*, in Hermann Kulke (ed): *The State in India 1000-1700*, (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.134-161; R.G. Fox has applied the concept to the Rajput State of Northern India too. R.G. Fox: *Kin, Clan, Raja, and Rule: State Hinterland Relations in Pre-Industrial India*, (Barkley, University of California Press, 1971). Basic political units in the segmentary state was a local territory (*nadu* in South India), these localities were grouped into zones, these into several major subdivisions and the latter into the macroregion or state. Ronald Inden: *Ritual Authority, and Cyclic Time in Hindu*

Kingship, in J.F.Richards (ed): *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1998), p.41.

53. Upendra Chandra Guha: *op.cit.*, p.31; J.B.Bhattacharjee: The Pre-Colonial Political Structure in Barak Valley ,in Milton S.Sangma (ed):*Essays on North-East India* ,(New Delhi ,Indus Publishing Company ,1994), p.72; *Idem* :*Cachar Under the British Rule in North East India* ,(Delhi ,Raj Publications ,1977 ),p.7.
54. King Nara Narayan had his chief queen (Bhanumati) from the family of the Vaisnava saint Sankaradeva.
55. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs .614-617, pp.125-126; *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.13.
56. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs.623-27, p.127.
57. *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.14.
58. The date of division of kingdom is a subject of debate. But most of the scholars accepted 1581 A.D. as the date of partition of the state. E.A.Gait (*A History of Assam*, 1963,p.57), Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed (*Cooch Biharer Itihas*, 1936, p. 121) and D. Nath (*History of the Koch Kingdom*, 1989,p.85).
59. The Persian sources have described the Eastern Koch kingdom as **Koch-Hajo** or **Hajo**. The Western part was known as **Behar** or **Nijbehar** or **Kamata** or **Kamata Behar**. King Nripendra Narayan, simply Anglicized the name as *Cooch Behar* in 1896 to remove the differentiability in nomenclature.
60. Before the death of Nara Narayan (1587 A.D.), Raghudev showed his loyalty and paid tribute to Nara Narayan.J.P. Wade: *An Account of Assam*, edited by Benudhar Sharma, (Lakhimpur, Madhupur Tea Estate, 1927), p.210.
61. E.A.Gait: *op.cit.*, p.63.
62. Khan Chowdhuri Amanatulla Ahmed: *Cooch Beharer Itihas*, p137.
63. *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. I, p.362.
64. Acceptance of Mughal suzerainty in 1596 by Lakshmi Narayan is often over-emphasized as the sudden transformation of Koch kingdom into Mughal vassalage. Charles Stewart (*History of Bengal*, reprint ed., 1971.), E.A.Gait (*A History of Assam*, 1963) and subsequent works on this subject, relying on the authority of statement of *Akbarnama* marked the 1596 A.D. as the beginning of the Koch vassalage to the Mughals.

65. S.K. Bhuiyan (ed): *Padsha Buranji or Annals of the Delhi Badshahate*, (Gauhati, DHAS, 1947), p.185; *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.14.
66. S.N.Bhattacharyya: *op.cit.*, p.112.
67. *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.14.
68. S.N.Bhattacharyya: *op.cit.*, p.114.
69. *Purani Assam Buranji*, p.56.
70. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, v. 734, p.147.
71. *Kamrupar Buranji*, p. 15.
72. *Ibid.*
73. Mirza Nathan: *Baharisthan-i-Ghaybi* translated into English by M.I.Borah (Gauhati, DHAS, 1936), (2vols) (henceforth *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*), vol. I, p.40.
74. *Baharistani-Ghaybi*, Vol.I, vol. I, pp.222-239.
75. *Ibid.*, pp. 229-239.
76. Gift offered to Shaykh Kamal, Mughal general, was a gigantic one of Rs.100000, 100 elephant and 100 horses, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, vol. I, p.240.
77. *Ibid.*, p.241.
78. *Ibid.*, pp.245-53.
79. *Ibid.*, p.405.
80. J.P.Wade: *An Account of Assam*, p.218.
81. *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, vol. II, p.521.
82. *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.18; J.P.Wade: *Account of Assam*, p.219.
83. Lakshmi Narayan had offered 500 *Muhars* (gold coins) to the Mughal Emperor Jahangir to confirm his loyalty to the Mughals. Jahangir accepted this submission and conferred one Iraqui horse, elephants and other valuable gifts. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri or Memoirs of Emperor Jahangir*: translated into English by Alexander Roger; edited by Henry Beveridge, reprint ed., (Delhi, Munshiram Monaharlal, 1968), vol. I, pp.43-444 and vol. II, p.2.
84. *Baharistan-i-Bgaybi*, vol. II, pp.703-708, 723.
85. *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.19; *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, vol. II, 521; J.P. Wade: *op. cit.*, p. 218.
86. *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, vol. II, p.40.
87. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, vol. I, p.443.

88. *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, vol. II, p.522.
89. E.A. Gait: *A History of Assam* revised ed., (Calcutta, 1963); S.N. Bhattacharyya: *A History of Mughal Northeast Frontier Policy*, reprint ed., (Calcutta, 1994); K.L. Barua: *Early History of Kamrupa* (Shillong, 1933); N.N. Acharyya: *History of Medieval Assam*, reprint ed., (Guwahati, 1984) and D. Nath: *History of Koch Kingdom* (Delhi, 1989). These works have over-emphasized the vassalage status of the Koches without paying adequate attention to the last years of Lakshmi Narayan's reign and Bir Narayan's rule. They retained their independent status in their territory including minting coins, maintenance of administration and militia.
90. C.Wessels: *Early Travelers in Central India* (1603-1721), reprint ed., (Madras, Asian Educational Service, 1992), pp.122-123. Although Eastern Koch kingdom was placed under the direct control of the Mughals but the kinsmen of Raghudeva and Parikshit Narayan like-- Bali Narayan, and tribal chiefs of hills area formerly subjected by Nara Narayan, had resented the Mughal administration. *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, vol. I, pp.409-10.
91. C.Wessels: *op.cit.*, p.131.
92. Official historians of Cooch Behar State are not unanimous about the date of accession of Prana Narayan and his coronation ceremony. According to the *Rajopakhyan* Bir Narayan ascended to the throne in 112 *Raja Saka* (*Rajopakhyan*, p.28). Harendra Narayan Chaudhri (*The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement*, Cooch Behar, 1903,p.234) puts the date as 1625 A.D., while Ananda Chandra Ghosh (*Cooch Bihar Itihas*, edited by Ananda Gopal Ghosh and Narayan Chandra Saha, Darjeeling, 1990,p.15) and Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed (*Cooch Bihar Itihas*, Cooch Behar, 1936,p.154) have fixed it as 1632 A.D. .We have fixed it on the basis of *account* of Stephen Cacella who found that Lakshi Narayan was died before 1927 A.D..
93. *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.24.
94. The Ahoms inflicted a crashing defeat to the Mughals. By 1636 A.D., they conquered vast territories from the Mughals including Pandu, Sarai Ghat, Sualkuchi, Hajo, Dakhinkul, Karaibari, etc. But in the next year, the Mughals re-

- conquered the lost territories. However, naval victory of the Ahoms in 1638 A.D. against the Mughals led both the parties to conclude peace in 1639.
95. *Purani Assam Buranji*, pp.113, 170-172; J.P.Wade: *An Account of Assam*, pp.285-86.
  96. Details of the diplomatic letters exchanged between Prana Narayan and the Ahom king have been given in the *Kamrupar Buranji*, pp.69-84.
  97. S.N. Bhattacharyya: *op.cit.*, p.299.
  98. *Ibid.*
  99. S.K.Dutta (ed): *Assam Buranji (1648-1681A.D.)*, 2nd ed., (Guwahati, DHAS, 1991), pp. 13-14; *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.52.
  100. *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.52; *Assam Buranji (1648-1681)*, p.14.
  101. *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.52.
  102. *Assam Buranji (1648-1681)*, p.15.
  103. Khan Chowdhuri Amantulla Ahmed: *op.cit.*, p.157.
  104. *Ibid.*,p.158.
  105. *Assam Buranji (1648-81)*, p.16.
  106. *Ibid.*p.17
  107. *Kamrupar Buranji*, pp.53-.54.
  108. *Assam Buranji (1648-1681)*, p.17.
  109. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
  110. *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.69.
  111. Vishnu Narayan had no good term with his father Prana Narayan he is said to have converted to Islam. H.Blochmann: Koch Behar, Koc Hajo and Assam, *JASB 71.1(1872)* p.67; also, Stewart: *op.cit.* p.289. But *Rajopakhyan* and other official history produced in the Koch court do not rely on it.
  112. According to the *Assam Buranji (1648-1681)* it was Rs.200000. *Assam Buranji (1648-1681)* p.19.
  113. H.Blochmann: Koch Bihar, Koch-Hajo and Asham in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, *JASB 71.1(1872)*, p.68.
  114. *Ibid*, p.87.
  115. *Ibid.*

116. Jadu Nath Sarkar: *History of Aurongzeb, (5 vols.)*, reprint ed.,(Calcutta, Orient Longman Ltd., 1972), vol. III, pp.126, 218.
117. See Map 3.
118. Satish Chandra: Review of the Crisis of the Jagirdari System, in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (eds): *The Mughal State 1526-1750*,(New Delhi ,Oxford University Press, 1998), p.350.
119. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op.cit.*, p.240.
120. *Ibid*, also *Rajopakhyan*, p.36.
121. *Rajopakhyan*: pp.37-38; Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op.cit.*, p.241.
122. *Rajopakhyan*, pp.39-40.
123. *Ibid.*,pp. 31-32; Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri :*op.cit.*p.236.
124. *Ibid*.
125. Mercer and Chouvet: *Cooch Behar Select Record Vol. II, or Mercer and Chauvet's Report on Cooch Behar in 1788* (Cooch Behar, The Cooch Behar State Press, 1869), henceforth *Mercer and Chauvet Report*, pp. 19.20, 29, 169-70.
126. *Rajopakhyan*, p.33.
127. *Ibid.*, p34.
128. *Mercer and Chauvet Report*, pp. 170,180.
129. *Ibid*, p.180.
130. Jagadindradev Raikat: *Raikat Bangsha O Tahader Rajjyer Sanschipta Bibaran*, edited by Nirmal Chandra Chaudhuri(Jalpaiguri, 1982),p. 23.
131. *Rajopakhyan*, p.40.
132. *Ibid*, p.37; *Mercer and Chauvet Report*, p.170.
133. *Rajopakhyan*, pp. 41-44; Rev.J.Long: *Selection from Unpublished Records of Governement for the Years 1748-1776*, edited by Mahadev Prasad Saha,(Calcutta ,Firma K.L.Mukhopadhaya,1973),p.715.
134. *Ibid.*,p.40 ;Aranvinda Deb: *Bhutan and India: A Study in Frontier Political Relations 1772-1865*, (Calcutta, Firma KLM Pvt.Ltd., 1976), p.74.
135. It was a common practice of the Koch state that it had to host an annual party for the Bhutanese at Chekakhata, a village in the Koch -Bhutan frontier. Both the

parties used to exchange gifts, which, however, from economic point of view was burdensome for the Koches.

136. *Mercer and Chouvet Report*, p.170; Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op.cit.*, p.243.
137. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op.cit.*, .p.244.
138. *Rajopakhyan*, p.45.
139. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op.cit.*, .p.244
140. *Rajopakhyan*, pp.49-53; *Mercer and Chouvet Report*, pp.170-171.
141. C.U.Aitchison: *A Collection of Treaties and Sanadas Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*, (14 vols.) reprint ed., (New Delhi, Mittal Publications, 1983), vol. II, pp. 189-192; Rev.J.Long: *Selection from Unpublished Records of Governement for the Years 1748-1776*, edited by Mahadev Prassad Saha, (Calcutta, Firma K.L.Mukhopadhaya, 1973), p.720; also see *Appendix E*.

## Chapter V

### Push and Pull Factors in the Economy: Resource Generation and Concentration.

While 'warfare' and 'leadership', two variables of early and secondary state formations<sup>1</sup> were significantly linked with the emergence of the Koch state; its economic solidarity was dependent to the surplus generating agricultural economy supplanted by the peasantization of the tribals. Technological acculturation had stimulated the process of peasantization of the tribals and *sanskritization* of their culture<sup>2</sup>. Specialization in crafts and monetization of the economic transactions through the circulation of a common currency by the Koches (*Narayani Tanka*) had accelerated the rate of surplus production that had been appropriated by the state.

#### 5.1. Economic Typologies: Tribal and Non-Tribal.

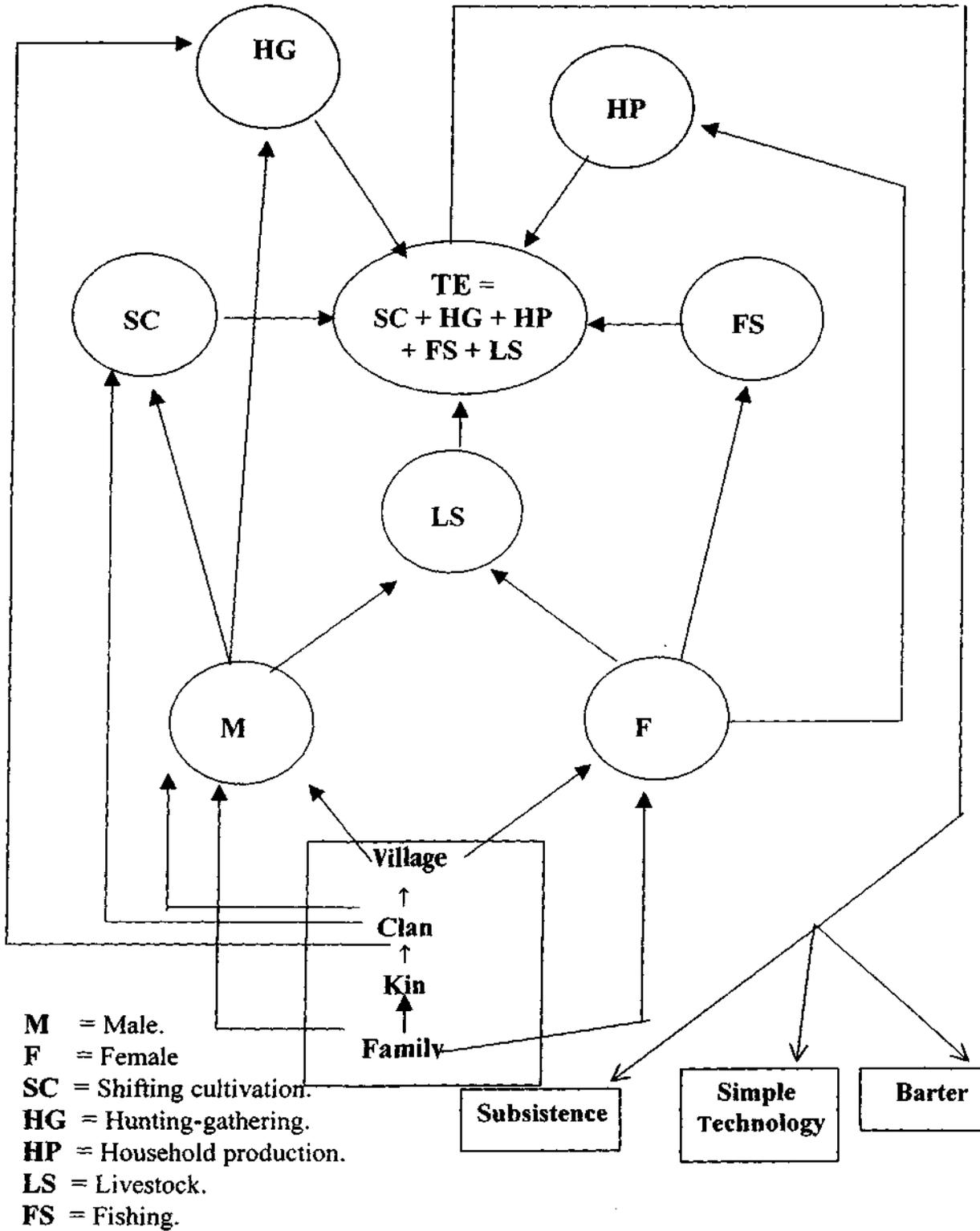
Main tribal groups of the present study are the Koches and Meches who settled down in large number in the geographical region of our study. The pertinent fact of their economy was the close relationship between the nature and natural environment they inhabited which is basically the hills and foothills of the Assam-Bengal Duars. Location and nature of the land had determined the mode of productions of their economy. So in the medieval period, the Meches kept them aside from the periodical inundated lands located in the north of the *Brahmaputra*.<sup>3</sup> But in the *Duars* they were acquainted with the artificial irrigation.<sup>4</sup> The late 19th century official reports on the Western Duars have spotted the Meches with their traditional habit of *jhum* (shifting) cultivation<sup>5</sup>. So in 1895 D. Sunder observed that

'the habits of the Meches were very nomadic, and they used to shift their cultivation and homesteads from place to place that they may obtain the full benefit of the virgin soil'.<sup>7</sup>

So it was the urge of utilization of virgin soil which made the Meches nomadic in their settlement.

*Jhum* cultivation of the Meches used to be carried out by the tribal villages and families<sup>7</sup> which have been illustrated in the Koch genealogies and chronicles.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 5.1.: Tribal-economy and settlement pattern.



Economically it alone was not self-sufficient. Cattle rearing were also a common and significant feature of their economy. Even Visvasimha and Sisvasimha, in their early life had participated in the cattle rearing with other tribal boys. Collective hunting for both ceremonial and subsistence, is apparent from the genealogies and the chronicles.<sup>9</sup> Fishing both community and household had been practiced by the women folk of the Koch and Mech tribes with a triangular fishing means called '*jakai*'. *Jakai* was being used by the Koch, Mech and Rabha tribes and is still prevalent in the *duars*. The subsidiary features of the tribal economy like--livestock, fishing and hunting made the whole economic structure as a mixed one.

The only craft that the Mongoloid tribes of the region had developed since the time immemorial is the *endi-culture*<sup>10</sup>. The Mech women were experts in rearing of *endi* silk worm and making thread and cloths from that silk. It was consumed within the family and rarely brought into the ceremonial markets.

Mostly forest products had been utilized for making the implements of the productions like--agricultural tools, hunting and fishing implements and weaving looms. Production was labour-oriented. The units of production had been varied in tune with the operation of productivity. *Jhuming*, hunting, fishing and livestock were mostly collective works or had community participation. But *endi-culture* was basically a family oriented - production.

The entire structure of the traditional tribal economy has been illustrated in the figure 5.1. It indicates that TE was a mixed economy with different subsidiaries such as--*jhum* cultivation (SC), hunting-gathering (HG), household production (HP), fishing (FS), and livestock (LS) or  $TE=SC+HG+HR+FS+LS$ . Technologically it was simple. The tribal crafts had no market network. The mode of exchange was confined to the barter level. So the tribal economy did not cross the level of subsistence. Whatever the surplus generated was consumed within the village or community in ceremonial feasts, folk dances and other community gatherings. In spite of it tribal economy had close proximity with the non-tribal economy of the same region.

Non-tribal economy of the region was far advanced than the subsistence economy of the tribals. Agriculture was the main source of surplus generation. Introduction of advanced agricultural techniques and technologies for rice cultivation by the *Kayastha*

*Bhuiyans* had contributed to the generation of surplus in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley.<sup>11</sup> Cultivation of other food grains and raw materials for crafts had multiplied the amount of surplus.

There are sufficient examples of specialization in crafts and division of labour in the non-tribal economy. Weaving, iron, earthen and ivory works with specialized technologies were the general feature of in that economic typology .It had enough market prospects. Means of exchange was not bartered. Rather cowry cells and metallic coins were used extensively. Thus there was ample scope of surplus exploitation.

## **5.2.Agriculture: Peasantization, Surplus Generation and Extractions.**

Juxtaposition of two different economic typologies in a particular region <sup>12</sup> had inevitably led to the diffusion of techniques and technologies of production system from the advanced to the less advanced. Simultaneously it quickened the process of the development of economic structure and helped the tribal economy to generate more surpluses to be exploited by the state. Moreover transfer of capital from the Chikina hill of Goalpara to Hingulabas and then to Kamatapur by the early Koch rulers <sup>13</sup> enabled the Koches to establish their control over the surplus generating agricultural economy of the plains of Northern Bengal. So the extraction of agricultural surplus from the 1560s to 1772 A.D. was the primary task of the Koch kingdom in its internal affairs.

### **5.2.1. Agricultural Products and Sub-Products.**

Agriculture was the main feature of both the tribal and non-tribal economy. Rice of different varieties was the main agricultural crop. Rice of two broad categories like-- *aush* (*ahu-bitri/bhadai*) and *aman* (*hemantika/sali*) were cultivated hugely in the Koch kingdom. Table 5.1 based on the 19th century official reports <sup>14</sup>shows that the Tista-Brahmaputra valley used to produce large varieties of *aush* and *aman*. *Aush* used to be sown regularly particularly in the highlands. The *aman* rice requires irrigation and transplantation of seed plants (*bichan*) to the main land. This rice requires law land and clay that can contain water and moisture for a long time. *Boa* rice used to sown broad caste in the low land (marshy land). The Koches, Meches and other tribals of the region were familiar with the cultivation of different varieties of *aush*, *aman* and *boa* paddy.

**Table 5.1.:** Varieties of rice cultivated in the Tista-Brahmaputra Valley.

District	<i>Aush/Bitri/Early</i>	<i>Aman/Sali/Late</i>
Cooch Behar	27 varieties	76 varieties
Rangpur	55 „	170 „
Darjeeling	11 „	24 „

Rice was the staple crop for both the tribals and non-tribals. Sub-products made from rice like--*chira* (parched rice), *muri* (fried rice) and *khai* (puffed rice) were very popular among the peoples of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. Other food grains like--wheat, *china*, *kaon*, *makai* (maize) and pulses were also grown in the region. Pulses of different varieties like--*moog* (*phaseolus mug*), *musur*, *ksheshari* (*lathyrus sativus*), *thakuri* (*phaseolus radiatus*), *rahar* (*gajanus indicus*) and pea were popular food grains.<sup>14</sup> Oil seeds such as --mustard (*sarisha/rai*) and *til* (*sesamum indicum*) were also grown in the Koch kingdom. Potato, ginger, garlic, turmeric, onion and arum were produced in abundance for local consumption. The cash crops mainly tobacco had large-scale production. The plains of Cooch Behar, particularly Dinhat, Mathabanga and Mekhliganj *Parganas* were the major sites of tobacco cultivation. Fiber like *shan* and *kunkura* (rhea) were also cultivated. The *shan* was used for making fishing net. *Kunkura* was famous for making trap. Cultivation of the last two varieties of fiber was confined to the fishing community.<sup>15</sup>

To offer the betel leaf (*pan*) to the guests was a common feature of the people of Tista-Brahmaputra valley including Koch, Mech, Ahom and non-tribal communities. The *Baruis* were and still are the traditional producer of betel leaf. In the Duars, betel leaf is still procured from the jungles.

Bamboo is a natural product which grows all over the country .Its varieties depend on the geological variations i.e. hills, plains etc. Hunting and fishing instruments, agricultural implements and building home and homesteads were basically made of bamboo of large varieties. Bamboo had extensive use in the making of furniture, musical instruments and utensils of daily uses. Bamboo was also used in making arms and weapons of the tribal militia<sup>16</sup> . Late 16th century account of Ralf Fitch, an English traveler, contains the testimony of great use of bamboo in the defence of the country .It recorded that

'all the countries is set with bamboo or canes made sharpe at both the ends and driven into the earth, and they can let in the water and drown the ground above knee deepe, that men nor horses can passe.<sup>17</sup>

Like the bamboo, *motha* grass was and still is a natural product. *Motha* had the largest use in making of mats. Timbers like- *sal* (*shorea robusta*), *sisu*, *khair*, *sonari*, *agoru*, *maina*, *bahera*, *ghila*, *silikha* (*centrena*), *tentul*, *bat*, *odal* (*stereulia*), *shimul* (*bombax malabaricum*) and other valuable trees grown naturally in the jungles of the Tista-Brhmaputra valley had their immense use in the domestic and community life of the people.

**Table 5.2:** Agricultural crops.

Food grains	Oil eeds	Cash crops	Roots & fruits	Others
paddy, wheat, china, kaon.	mustard, lentil.	jute, <i>shan</i> (net fibre), <i>kunkura</i> (rhea), <i>mutha</i> , tobacco.	Potato, onion, ginger, <i>kanchu</i> , turmeric, orange, pineapple.	bamboo, betel nut, cottons.

Fruits, both cultivated and wild, were produced in the region having local characteristic. Jack fruits, banana, mangoes, olive and citrus fruits were produced in the kingdom. The *Yogini Tantra* supplies a vivid list of fruits and vegetables dedicated to the Devi Kamakshya during her worship which include most of the items mentioned above, and papaya, brinjal, plum, guava, sweet oranges (*santara*) of different varieties. The *Fathiya-i-Ibriya* and *Letters of Stephen Cacella* have mentioned the extensive production of oranges.<sup>18</sup> Among the citrus fruits lemon and *lothkan* drew the attention of the Mughals for their taste<sup>19</sup>. Pineapples and sugar cane were also produced in the region.

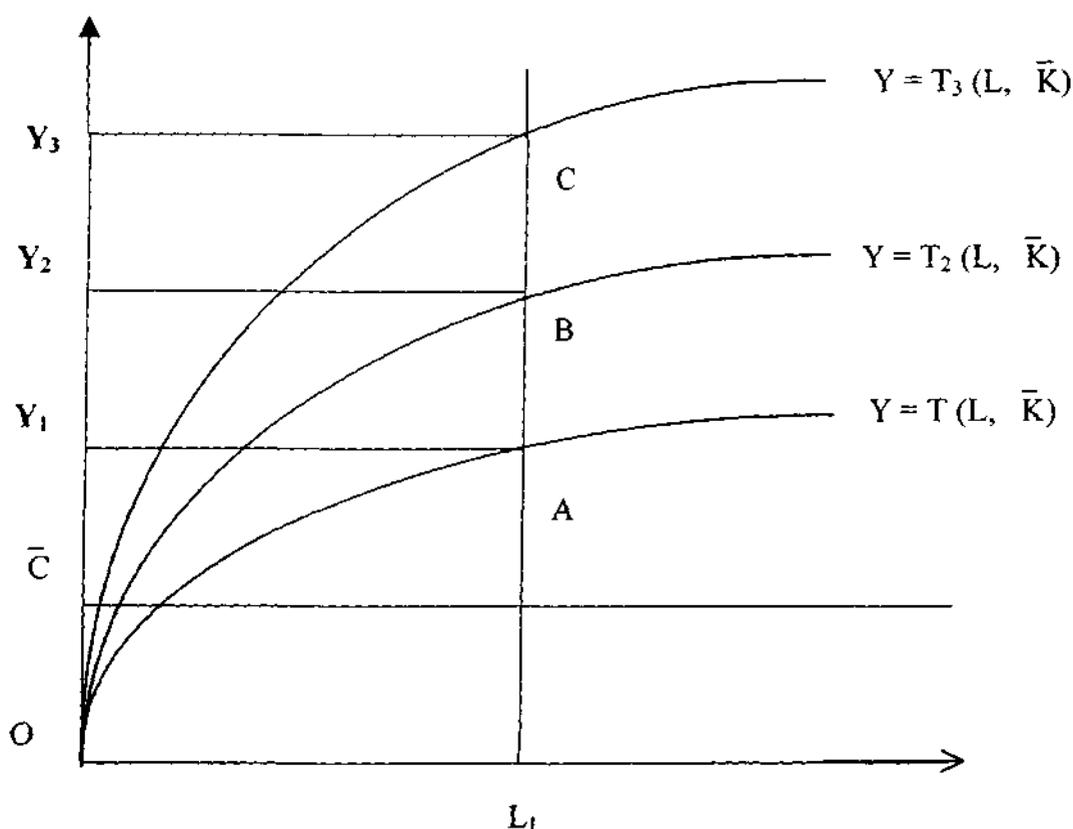
Cotton was another item of economic importance. The hilly area of Chikinagram and Khuntaghat of Lower Assam was a cotton growing area of the kingdom<sup>20</sup>. Late 18<sup>th</sup> century and early colonial reports on Bhutan have recorded the cultivation of cotton in the *Duars* region and gathering of cotton fiber from the forests<sup>21</sup>.

### 5.2.2. Adoption of Advanced Technology and Surplus Generation.

Agricultural products both food grains and cash crops, cultivated in the Koch kingdom, did require specialize mechanism and technologies for generation of surplus. Wet-rice cultivation with sophisticated technologies introduced by the non-tribals had been diffused to the tribals of the entire region that stimulated the changes of tribal

mode of production. It increased the rate of surplus generation. The iron plough and spade/hoe (*kodal*) had replaced wooden plough and implements of *jhuming*. Although the tribals maintained their traditional mode of production in the hilly region but in the Karatoya-Brahmaputra valley they adopted the non-tribal production technology <sup>22</sup>. So the 19th century colonial reports, particularly of Rangpur, Dinajpur, Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Gaolpara, Kamrup and Darrang districts have spotted the Koches as cultivators having the knowledge of plain land cultivation identical with the Hindu agriculturist castes. <sup>23</sup> So the tribal mode of production had been gradually transformed into the settled plough cultivation at least in the plains of the state and the tribals were peasantized.

**Figure. 5.2:** Technological acculturation and surplus generation.



**Y**=Level of production or output.

**T**=Techniques of production.

**L**=Labour, **K**=Fixed capital.

Adoption of new techniques virtually affected their socioeconomic culture and generation of more surpluses. which has been explained in the **figure 5.4**. The **Figure 5.2**. explains the relationships between the changes in surplus production and the techniques of production  $Y=T(L, K)$ . Production function  $Y$  = level of output,  $L$  &  $K$ , are the factors of production where  $K$  is fixed.  $T$ = Technique of production and  $\bar{C}$  = fixed consumption level. The surplus production increases in tune with the application of  $T$ . When  $T$  is the technique of production surplus is  $Y_1\bar{C}$ . But when  $T_2$  is the technique, surplus increased to  $Y_2$   $Y_1$  when labour  $L$  remained constant. So 'the level of surplus production was dependent to the level of techniques adopted for the production'.

The rate of transformation of the technology of agriculture was, however, slow. But the adoption of 'non-tribal production system' had considerably modified the cultural life of the tribals. In spite of continuity of the animism and worship of nature certain Hindu deities as the symbols of economic prosperity have entered in their life which has been conceptualized as *sanskritization* by the earlier scholars. But the impact of the technological acculturation in the *sanskritization* process must not be overlooked

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### 5.2.3. Appropriation of Agricultural Surplus.

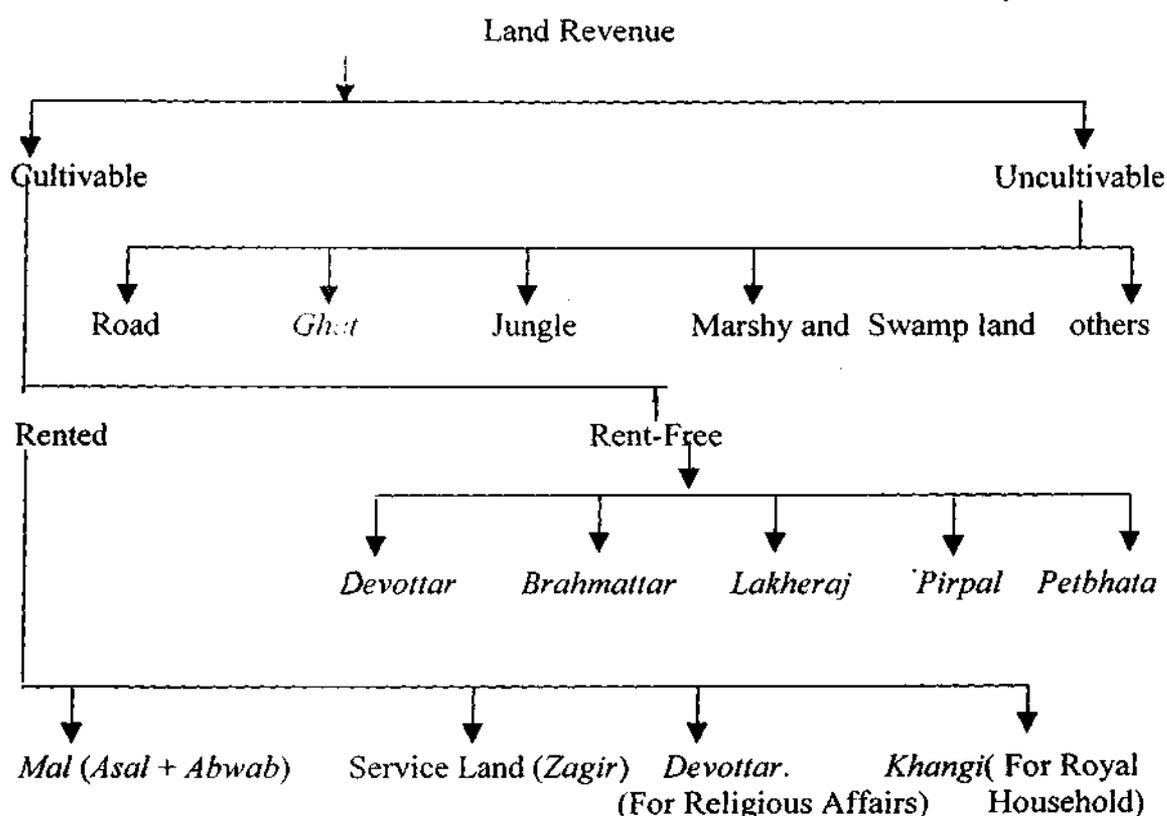
Extraction of surplus from the settled agriculture was an essential pre-requisite of tribal state formation in Northeast India <sup>25</sup> but availability of natural products and their multiple uses in the economic life of the tribals to some extent enabled those tribal people to be free from the economic control of the state. But the Koch state had taken few innovative tools to concentrate the agricultural surplus in the form of land revenue and exploitation of services in lieu of revenues.

#### 5.2.3.1. Exploitation of Land Revenue.

The subsistence economy of the tribals with the tribal mode of production do not produce essential surplus for the transformation of a tribal chiefdom to a state. So for a tribal chief, plunder was a popular means for exploiting surplus from the surplus generating political units. So founder king Visvasimha began the plunder by his tribal militia. Nara Narayan continued the plunder through warfare till the 1560s as mentioned in the chapter IV. But at the same time he initiated the extraction of the revenue from the cultivable land. The entire land structure under the Koch kingdom has

been explained in the Figure 5.3. It indicates the existence of two broad categories of land in the kingdom i.e., 'cultivated' and 'uncultivated'. The cultivable land again was of two categories 'rented' and 'rent-free'. The *brahmattar* (land donated to the Brahmins), *devottar* (land granted for maintenance of religious institution), *lakheraj* (reward for good service done for the state), *pirpal* (for maintenance of mosque and Islamic religious institutions) and *petbhata* (land granted for the maintenance of the relatives of the ruling family) comprised the late category <sup>26</sup>which was comparatively less than the first category.

Figure 5.3: Land revenue structure under the Koch kingdom.



The rented land had been classified into four categories like *mal*, *zagir*, *khangī* and *devottar*. *Mal* was a kind of land revenue directly paid by the *rayats* (cultivators) to the state. From the *zagir* (service land), the state could not collect cash revenue but exploited personal service according to the skill and efficiency of the *Zagirdars*. Each *Zagirdar* was allowed not less than 1 *bish* or 13 *bighas* of cultivable land. <sup>27</sup> Revenue of

the *khangi* land had been reserved for the expenditure of the royal household. The rent extracted from the *devottar* land use to meet the expenditure of the religious affairs, including festivals and maintenance of the temples built by the state<sup>28</sup>. The revenues extracted from this kind of land had maintained the costs of construction of large number of temples of popular deities and religious institutions. So it was not rent-free like the land granted to the temples' personal maintenance (*devottar*).

*Mal* being the principal categories of land revenue was the main source of state's income. It consisted with *asal* (or original rent) and *abwab* or additional cess, collected annually by the state officials called *Sajawals*.<sup>29</sup> However, land was not properly measured and assessed for revenue collection although Nara Narayan attempted to survey the cultivable land called *poa-bandha*<sup>30</sup> and granted service-land to the *paiks* and *zagirdars*. King Moda Narayan (1665-1680) and Upendra Narayan (1714-1763 A.D.) had also assessed the land called *piyal* and *dhala jabda*, respectively<sup>31</sup>. The term *dhala jabda* indicates the exact description of land possessed by the cultivators.<sup>32</sup> But *poa-bandha*, *piyali* and *dhala -jabda* do not indicate the exact mode of revenue assessment prevailed in the state. In spite of it two popular units of land measurement had been in existence in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley like- *bish* equivalent to 12 standard *bighas* and 16 *kathas* or 13 *bighas*<sup>33</sup> and *pura* equivalent to four *bighas*.<sup>34</sup> *Bish* was also in use for revenue and service value assessment of the *zagirdars*.

From the foregoing discussion it appears that there was variation in land revenue assessment of the country during the period of our study for variation in productivity of land. First grade of land was assessed at Rs. 20 per *bish* and Rs 15 was the rate for second grade. For the third category the cultivators used to pay Rs. 10 per *bish*.<sup>35</sup>

The rate of land revenue assessment of the Koches was lower than the Mughals<sup>36</sup>. So the peasants of the Koch kingdom had opposed the Mughal rule introduced temporarily after the invasion of Mir Jumla in 1661 A.D.. Thus Shihabuddin Talish, an eyewitness of the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century political affairs of the Koch state, aptly identified that the over-assessment of land revenue was responsible for the opposition of the

Mughal rule in its overthrown.<sup>37</sup> Rate of land revenue in the Koch state was thus definitely less than 1/3 the rate of the Mughals.

The land directly controlled by the state had produced a large share in the surplus, extracted from the cultivable land. The *khang* land had been reserved for the maintenance of the ruling family and disappeared only in 1864 A.D.. The '*andaran land*' (land held by the ladies of the palace)<sup>38</sup> was although rent-free but had its use in the state affairs particularly during the political and economic emergency<sup>39</sup>.

The process of revenue concentration had been fluctuated during the period of our study. In the initial stage of state formation, Visvasimha could not introduce any new method in revenue collection. Nara Narayan allowed the former revenue collectors like-- *Bhuiyans* to collect revenue from the peasants. However, state officials such as *Dewan*, *Karzi* and *Chaudhury* were held responsible for the collection of revenue accordance with the circumstances. *Bakshi*, a state official, had been entrusted the charge of taking care of the *zagir land*. The *Sajawals* were appointed in later period for revenue collections. Collection of revenue was very often exorbitant and the state officials oppressed the cultivators.<sup>40</sup>

There was variation in the mode of revenue collection also. The 'core area' had been in the direct collection of state while the 'conquered territories' and 'lost territories'<sup>41</sup> were left under the charge of the local *zamindars* to collect revenue from the peasants and its payment to the state after deducting their share. This system came to be known as *jamabandi*<sup>42</sup>. The *Zamindars* were mostly hailed from the Koch princelets.<sup>43</sup> Even the state itself took the charge of three *chaklas*, conquered by the Mughals during the period of Rup Narayan (1711 A.D.). *Izara* or deeds of Chakla Boda, Patgram and Purba Bhag had been taken in the name of *Nazir* in 1711 A.D.<sup>44</sup> and the state possessed the territories in terms of payment of revenue. The *Raikat* of Baikuntapur also made similar arrangements in 1687.<sup>45</sup> So after the 'Grant of '*Dewani* of Bengal' to the East India Company in 1765 A.D.,<sup>46</sup> revenues of the above mentioned *chaklas* began to be deposited to the Company's treasury. So we must acknowledge that the mode of revenue extraction had been fluctuated for the changing political status of the state.

### 5.2.3.2..Amount of Land Revenue.

It is very difficult to enumerate the exact amount of land-revenue collected by the state both in the form of cash and kind. Early Koch rulers had stressed on the tribute collection through warfare. But the beginning of intra-Koch conflicts and Mughal-Ahom interventions in the state had increased the demand of revenue in cash when tribute collection through aggressive warfare was put off. So the process of internal exploitation had been regularized. From the occasional references contained in the contemporary literatures an idea can be made about the amount of collected revenue. Annual tribute (*peshkash*) paid by Lakshmi Narayan (1587-1627) to the Mughals was Rs. 100000 or 80000 *Narayani Tanka*.<sup>47</sup> The *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* claims that King Raghudeva Narayan had a hard cash of Rs. three crores in his treasury.<sup>48</sup> King Parikshit Narayan offered a *peshkash* of Rs 80000 to the Mughals.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Prana Narayan (1632-65) paid Rs. 550000 to the Mughal governor of Bengal in 1665 A.D. as an indemnity.<sup>50</sup> The *Fathiya-i-Ibriya* also refers that the kingdom of Prana Narayan had the capacity of yielding Rs. 800000 as land revenue per year.<sup>51</sup> Even if *Fathiya's* writer estimated the revenue according to the Mughal system of  $\frac{1}{3}$ <sup>rd</sup> of the total production it was not less than Rs. 600000 in the Koch system (of  $\frac{1}{4}$ <sup>th</sup> of the gross production). Since the last quarter of the 17th century to the conclusion of the Anglo-Cooch Behar Treaty in 1773 A.D. the exploited revenue was tripartite due to trifurcation of power among the King, *Dewan* and *Nazir*. For the maintenance of state by king, militia by *Nazir* and civil administration by *Dewan*; the revenue yielding tracts were tripartite. The *Nazir* had the largest share of  $\frac{9}{16}$ (56.25%) of the total land .The king enjoyed  $\frac{6}{16}$ <sup>th</sup> (37.50%) and the *Dewan* was given the rest i.e.,  $\frac{1}{16}$ (6.25%).<sup>52</sup> Hence, total amount was not calculated and the collection had its variations.

### 5.2.3.3.Exploitation of Service.

Koch state since the beginning of its formation had maintained a method to exploit services in lieu of land revenue. The *Raja Vamsavali* indicates that certain professional castes such as *Teli* (oil men), *Mali* (gardener), *Dhoba* (washer men), *Kahar* (palanquin bearer), *Kamar* (ironsmith), *Sonari* (goldsmith), *Navik* (boatmen) and *Chamar* (tanners) were granted rent-free land by the state. which had to render

their respective services to the state<sup>53</sup> as *paik*<sup>54</sup>. More over certain communities were granted lands in terms of rendering services to the state. The *Morungias* (the inhabitants of Morung of Eastern Nepal brought to the Koch kingdom by Nara Narayan) were obliged to render services as *zagirdars* (service landholders).<sup>55</sup> *Hazra* (head of the buffalo keeper), *Tarai* (headman of the plough), *Tekar Saliya* (waterman), *Tirkar* (wicker work maker), *Behura* (palanquin bearer), *Haluya* (ordinary servant), and many other professional posts (as mentioned in the **table 5.3**) had been held by the *zagirdars*. Economically it was more profitable for the state because land was plenty in the state. This system had been continued for a long time even after the conclusion of the Anglo-Cooch Behar Treaty in 1773.<sup>56</sup> As a whole 'feudal art of exploiting artistic, menial and professional services of the subjects in lieu of land revenue had enabled the tribal state to augment of surplus through the exploitation of labour-value'.

**Table 5.3:**Service Landholders.

Name of the office held by the <i>Zagirdars</i>	Service rendered /meaning.
<i>Bakshi</i>	An officer who looks after the <i>zagirdars</i> and ceremonies maintained by the state
<i>Barait</i>	<i>Farash</i> maker.
<i>Bariaya</i>	A domestic worker.
<i>Bakura Dhara</i>	A servant attached to the <i>Toshakhana</i> or treasury.
<i>Chhatra dhara</i>	To hold umbrella
<i>Deori</i>	Servant attached to the temple.
<i>Farasia</i>	Light man.
<i>Halua</i>	Plough man.
<i>Hazra</i>	Keeper of livestock of the state.
<i>Jharudar</i>	Sweeper.
<i>Manta</i>	Peon.
<i>Napit</i>	Barber.
<i>Pankhadhara.</i>	Holder of fan.
<i>Pujari</i>	Priest.
<i>Soya Saliya</i>	Kitchen Servant.
<i>Tarai</i>	Headman of the <i>Haluas</i> .
<i>Tekar saliya</i>	Waterman.
<i>Thayat</i>	Betel maker.
<i>Tirkar</i>	Wickerwork maker.

### 5.2.3.4. Other Revenues from the Land.

The state had its income from the uncultivated land consisting roads, *ghats*, market place, fishery and jungle. Jungle land was often cleared for fresh cultivation. The tribes like Mech and Garo were allowed to enjoy the cleared land as rent-free for certain years and become taxable after the maturity of contract<sup>57</sup>. A tradition of leasing out the fisheries, markets and the *ghats* (ferry) to the highest bidders was developed in the state. It was an additional income for the state.

### 5.3. Crafts and Industries.

#### 5.3.1. Textile Industries.

The Mech, Koch and Rabhas of the Duars had developed the *endi-culture* with subsidiary crafts like weaving and dyeing. The art of dyeing of the threads made from the *endi*, *mugha* and cotton fiber had been developed among the tribes. The dye was generally procured from the bark and leaf<sup>58</sup> of the wild timbers and the creepers i.e. nature. *Endi culture* was a common and household production of the Meches. Even it became a compulsory tradition of the Mech brides to be acquainted with the weaving with their traditional loom called *sanchali* before their marriage.<sup>59</sup> Weaving of *mekhli* cloth from the fiber<sup>60</sup> of jute produced in the plains of the kingdom had been survived till the early 20th century. The *endi* and *mekhli* produced by the Koch, Mech and Rabha tribes with their traditional technology<sup>61</sup> were the important part of the Cooch Behar-Bhutan and Bengal-Cooch Behar trades<sup>62</sup> beside the domestic uses.

Traditional non-tribal weavers called *Tantis* had developed the art of weaving cloths who had their large concentration in Bengal and Assam. Two other castes--*Jolah* and *Yogi* had their expertise in weaving. Visvasimha had appointed a state-supervisor on the weaving industries and to collect taxes from the weavers and washermen<sup>63</sup>. Nara Narayan had continued this office. His patronage to Sankardeva had indirectly contributed to the development of the weaving industry as Sankardeva was given the charge of *Mahal* of Barpeta particularly to look after the *Tantis*<sup>64</sup>. Tantikuchi village was famous for weaving of a special cloth called of *Vrindavaniya kapar*.<sup>65</sup> Sualkuchi, Kamarkuchi and Narayanpur were other notable centers of textile industries during the Koch rule<sup>66</sup>.

### 5.3.2. Pottery

The art of making earthenware had also been developed in the Brahmaputra valley both among the tribals and non-tribals (caste). The *Hira* tribe was the maker of earthenware with very simple technology even without wheel. A section of the *Kalita* also adopted the art of pottery.<sup>67</sup> However, pottery as a profession of a caste (*Kumar*) had very little concentration in the Koch state. The use of wheel enabled the professional *Kumar* to produce big *handis* and *saras* or big earthen pots.<sup>68</sup> Quality of pottery was inferior from that of Bengal. Thus, *kalasi* (pitchers), water jugs and utensils were imported from Eastern Bengal.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, image making did not flourish in the region as it was in Bengal. But it became a profession of a small section of the people like *Khanikars*.<sup>70</sup>

### 5.3.3. Cattle-Powered Crafts.

Pressing of oil seeds and making of oil had been developed as a special craft. The professional oilman caste called *Telis* had their large concentration in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. Visvasimha appointed his son Ananta Narayan as an officer to look after the *Telis*.<sup>71</sup> Nara Narayan continued the system and the *Telis* had served the state even as *paik*.<sup>72</sup> Mustard oil was an important item of export from the kingdom.<sup>73</sup> The *Telis* and *Kalus* (oil maker) had developed the cattle powered mill (*ghani*) for the production of mustard oil. Like the *ghani*, sugar cane crushing machine was also a cattle-powered mill. Juice extracted from the sugar cane was used to prepare *gud* or molasses. The southern portion of the kingdom used to produce sugar cane and *gud* in large quantity.<sup>74</sup> However, Sugar used to import from Bengal.<sup>75</sup>

**Table 5.4:** Crafts and industries.

Textiles	Traditional Professional Castes	Metal and Ivory	Wood and bamboo works.	Others
<i>endi</i> and <i>muga, silk</i>	<i>Tanti, Teli, Kumar, Kamar, Chammar, Dhoba,</i>	Ivory works, brass works	boat making, image making, bamboo works.	Huskin g, <i>ghee</i> .

### 5.3.4. Iron and Jewelry.

Smithery was an inseparable part of the crafts and industries of the Koch kingdom. *Kamars* or blacksmiths of the traditional caste Hindu society were numerous in the kingdom who were the chief producer of the iron implements and implements of ordinary uses such as *dao* (knife), *kodal* (hoe), and cooking utensils were manufactured

by them. The *Kamars* had also developed their expertise in manufacturing the lock, padlocks, sacrificial knives, spears, clamps for building boat, swords, arms and other items of required by the people. The Koch the state had keen interest about the ironworks. So Visvasimha appointed his son, Brishaketu, as the supervisor of the iron works.<sup>76</sup>

The goldsmiths (*Sonar/Bania*) were not numerous in the Koch kingdom. The *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* shows that prince Surasimha was appointed as the state-officer to look after the gold smithery.<sup>77</sup> Gold and silver ornaments worn by the women folk of the kingdom like-*har* (necklace), *footi* (ear ring), *bankharu* (an ornament for leg), *noth* (nose ring), *kadena* (a kind of ear ornament) etc., were manufactured by the *Sonaries*.<sup>78</sup> Beside the professional gold smiths, the *Kalitas* of Lower Brahmaputra valley had also developed their expertise in this craft.<sup>79</sup>

### 5.3.5. Carpentry and other Artisans

The carpenters were mainly *Kalitas* and other tribes of the lower Brahmaputra valley. They managed the works from the making of boat to the making of agricultural tools. The war boats, merchant boats and small boats had great use in the river system of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. The navy introduced by Nara Narayan and retained by subsequent Koch kings significantly contributed to the growth of the boat making industries. The 17<sup>th</sup> century Persian works like - *Fathiya-i-Ibriya* and *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* have left some references about war boats and general boats of the region. The *charita* literatures repeatedly illustrated the importance of the boats for transportation in the river system of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley.

Perhaps the best expertise had developed among the tribals and lower castes of the region were the bamboo works. Implements and tools of agriculture, fishing, hunting and weaving were used to manufacture from the bamboos of large varieties. The *sanchali* (weaving loom) of the Meches, traps, fishing instruments like-*jakai* used by Koch, Mech and Rabha tribes were the bamboo-made implements. Agricultural tools like ladder, plough, jaw, *bida* and *mugur* were made from bamboo<sup>80</sup>. Bamboo had immense use in manufacturing furniture like-chair, *Mura*, *jhapi* and *mathal* (used as umbrella to protect the head from heavy rain), baskets and pots. Bamboo made special weapon called *bish payiji* (poisonous bamboo stick)<sup>81</sup> had special use in the defence of the country.

There were few more small-scale crafts developed in the region. Mat or *pati* made by the *patias* from the *mutha* grass<sup>82</sup> had domestic use and was marketable small-craft. Production of lime or calcium carbonate by the *Chunari* or *Mukhi*<sup>83</sup> and fishing by *Nadials* and *Keots* were other small industries of the region. Art of making rice by using the traditional husking machine (*dheki* or *udu khol* and *chham-ghain*) was basically confined to the domestic circles.

The *Kalitas* developed their expertise in copper, brass and bell metal works. The *Hiras* and *Marias* also were expert in the in brass works.<sup>84</sup> Due to the availability of wild elephants and other animals ivory work and leatherwork had also been developed in the kingdom

There was scarcity of salt in the region of the present study. Salt produced from hill rocks was not sufficient. Thus an alternative of salt had been developed in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. Salted water made from the ashes of banana barks and dry jackfruits had been in use in lieu of salt. This alternative became so popular that the Koch-Rajbanshi people of North Bengal and Assam had and still have a special dish made with this ash called *chheka*.

### 5.3.6. Technological Acculturation.

The crafts and industries developed in the region were the results of both tribal innovation and technological acculturation from outside. The weaving technology developed by the Bodo tribes was the outcome of their long experience in the *endiculture* and largely confined to the domestic use. It was labour intensive production and cost of production was very high for which commercially it was less profitable for the manufacturer. On the contrary, productions of professional weaving castes (*Tanti*, *Yogi* and *Jolah*) were more profitable. However, technologies of iron works, oil pressing and few other crafts had been gradually diffused to the tribals of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. So the *gazetteers*, *census* and other *official survey* conducted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century have recorded that the *Khenas* are the expert in oil pressing<sup>85</sup>, the *Keots* have their expertise in mustard oil making<sup>86</sup> and the *Koches* and the *Kalitas* are expert in iron and jewelry works<sup>87</sup>. So 'technological acculturation' was 'a process by which the tribals adopted the occupations of non-tribals (caste) which was equally linked with their social mobility i.e. *sanskritization*.

### 5.3.7. Taxes and Revenues from the Industrial Sectors.

Beside the land revenue, the state also exploited the revenue from the craftsmen and artisans. The *Darrang Raj Vansavali* has given a list of manufactures from which the state could derive taxes. The weavers had to pay Rs. 2 per annum as tax to the government.<sup>88</sup> The oilman, washermen, goldsmith, blacksmiths, traders and musicians also had to pay taxes to the state<sup>89</sup>. But the rate of revenues collected from these craftsmen yet to be measured. The artisans were also allowed to render their 'service value' to the state instead of cash taxes as mentioned earlier. So the extraction of taxes and revenues from the industrial sector had fattened the treasury (*bhandar*) of the state.

### 5.4. Currency System and the Growth of Trade and Commerce.

The process of state formation in Northeast India is significantly linked with the striking and circulating coins by the emerging states. Like Kachari, Jayantia and Tripura states, the Koches also introduced their own coins called *Narayani Tanka*. The pre-Koch Tista-Brahmaputra valley was although acquainted with several medium of exchanges like- cowry cells,<sup>90</sup> metal coins,<sup>91</sup> cattle, paddy,<sup>92</sup> the slaves and handloom products; <sup>93</sup> coins of the Koches (*Narayani Tanka*) became the largest circulated medium of exchange in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. The earliest Koch coin, so far been discovered, is bearing the date *Saka* 1477 (1555 A.D.) which was issued by Nara Narayan. The subsequent rulers from Lakshmi Narayan (1587-1627 A.D.) to Rajendra Narayan (1770-72) have issued a large number of coins of half-rupee and quarter-rupee denominations. However, no coin of Visvasimha has come into light.

#### 5.4.1. The Narayani Tankas.

Gold and silver plundered from Northeast Indian states by King Nara Narayan and Chilarai had been transformed into the *Narayani Tanka*. The coins of rupee, half-rupee and quarter-rupee denominations of Nara Narayan, discovered from Chandir Jhar (Alipurduar, 1986), Harisinga (Mangoldai, 1990), Haflong and Modgharia (Guwahati, 1986), Barundanga (Dhubri, 1996), Phulbari (West Garo Hills, 1992)<sup>94</sup> and other places; prove the circulation of *Narayani tanka* in a larger area of Northeast India. Nara Narayan also allowed the king of Khyram of Khasi hills<sup>95</sup> and Jayantia kings of Jayantia hills<sup>96</sup> to strike coins bearing the name of Nara Narayan. Gohain Kamal, *Dheyam* of Khaspur, after detaching him from the control of the core area, also minted

coins bearing the name of King Nara Narayan.<sup>97</sup> So the coins of Nara Narayan had been minted from several places of Northeast India and North Bengal.

The *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* narrates that Raghudeva Narayan had a reserve of 30000000 *Narayani Tanka* in his treasury .His coins of rupee and half-rupee denominations bearing the date *Saka* 1510 (1588 A.D.) have been brought into light. The basic difference of Raghudeva Narayan's coins is that it bears the invocation to *Hara-Gauri* while the coins of other kings had the invocation to Shiva. Although, Parikshit Narayan's reign was a turbulent period, his coins of one rupee denomination have been discovered.

**Table 5.5.** An eye view on the *Narayani Tanka*

King	Date	Denomination (s).	Obverse	Reverse	Comment (s).
Nara Narayan	1477 <i>Saka</i>	¼Rupee, ½Rupee, Rupee.	<i>Sri Sri Shiva Charana Kamala Madhu Karashya</i>	<i>Sri Sriman Nara Narayanasya Saka 1477.</i>	The script is of early Bengali character and <i>Nagari</i> .
Lakshmi Narayan.	1509 <i>Saka</i> and 98 <i>Raja Saka</i> .	¼Rupee, ½Rupee, Rupee.	<i>Sri Sri Shiva Charana Kamala Madhu Karashya .</i>	<i>Sri Sriman Lakshmi Narayanshya Saka 1509 / Raja Saka 98.</i>	His coins are bearing two dates, 1509 <i>Saka</i> and 98 <i>Rajasaka</i> .
Raghudev a Narayan	1510 <i>Saka</i>	½ Rupee, Rupee,	<i>Sri Sri Hara Gauri Charana Kamala Madhu Karashya .</i>	<i>Sri Sri Raghudeva Narayan Bhupalashya Saka 1510.</i>	-----
Parikshit Narayan	1525 <i>Saka</i>	Rupee	<i>Sri Sri Shiva Charana Kamala Madhu Karashya .</i>	<i>Sri Sri Parikshit Narayan Bhupalashya Saka 1525.</i>	-----
Bir Narayan	1547 <i>Saka</i> / 118 <i>Raja Saka</i>	½ Rupee, Rupee.	<i>Sri Sri Krishna Charana Kamala Madhu Karashya</i>	<i>Sri Srimad Bira Narayanashy a ,Saka 1547/Rajasa ka 118.</i>	Instead of Shiva, Krishna became the invocation.
Prana Narayan	<i>Saka</i> 1554, 1555.	½ Rupee, Rupee.	<i>Sri Sri Shiva Charana Kamala</i>	<i>Sri Srimat Prana</i>	He had issued

	<i>Rajasaka</i> 127,129,130 ,131,140,14 1,146,150, 151,152, 155,etc.		<i>Madhu Karashya .</i>	<i>Narayanashya</i> <i>a</i> <i>Bhupalashya</i> <i>Sake 1554</i> and other dates.	coins in different dates.(date of the minting )
Moda Narayan	<i>Raja Saka</i> 170	½ Rupee.	..	<i>Sri Srimat</i> <i>Moda</i> <i>Narayanshya</i> <i>Sake 170.</i>	-----
Vasudeva Narayan	Date is not visible	½ Rupee	..	<i>Sri Srimat</i> <i>Vasudeva</i> <i>Narayanshya</i> <i>Sake ?</i>	-----
Mahindra Narayan	..	..	Controversial	---	-----
Rup Narayan	..	..	<i>Sri Sri Shiva</i> <i>Charana Kamala</i> <i>Madhu Karashya .</i>	<i>Sri Srimat</i> <i>Rupa</i> <i>Narayanshya</i> . <i>Sake (not</i> <i>visible)</i>	-----
Upendra Narayan	..	..	..	<i>Sri Sri</i> <i>Upendra</i> <i>Narayan</i> (date is not visible)	-----
Devendra Narayan	..	..	..	<i>Sri Srimat</i> <i>Devendra</i> <i>Narayanshya</i> <i>Sake (?)</i>	-----
Dhairendr a Narayan	..	..	..	<i>Sri Srimat</i> <i>Dhairendra</i> <i>Narayan.</i> Date is not visible	-----
Rajendra Narayan	..	..	..	<i>Rajendra</i> <i>Narayan</i> Date is not visible.	-----

Laksmi Narayan continued the minting of coins of rupee, half-rupee and quarter-rupee denominations. His coins have been spotted in different places of North Bengal and Northeast India bearing the date 1509 *Saka* (1587 A.D.) and *Rajasaka* 98 (1608). The coins of Bir Narayan bear the dates 1548 *Saka* and 117 *Rajasaka* (1527 A.D). Prana Narayan issued a large number of rupees bearing the actual date of their minting

(see Table 5.5). The *Fathiya-i-Ibriya* mentioned that Prana Narayan had also issued gold coins.<sup>98</sup> However, the subsequent Koch kings merely issued quarter-rupees in large scale. Minting of *Narayani Tanka* under the supervision of the *Bhandar-Thakur* had been continued even after the conclusion of the 'Anglo- Cooch Behar Treaty in 1773 A.D'<sup>99</sup>.

Inspite of independent status and considerable influence over the Koch kingdom. Bhutan used to get her coins from the Koch kingdom by sending silver.<sup>100</sup> However, Bhutan started minting her own coins after adopting minting technology from the Koches<sup>101</sup> and their coins came to be known as *Deva Tanka*.<sup>102</sup>

The *Narayani Tanka* became an acceptable medium of exchange both in inter-regional and intra-regional trade of North Bengal, Northeast India, Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet<sup>103</sup>. It led to the growth of trade and commerce in favour of the Koch state. Contemporary literatures particularly the biographies of Sankardeva and his disciples contain the references of circulation of the coins among the masses of the region. The *Guru Charita* of Ramcharan Thakur frequently mentions the *taka* (rupee), *adhtaka* (½ rupee), *shiki* (¼ rupee) and cowries as the prevailing coins for ordinary and big transactions. Inspite of existence of barter system in the Duars<sup>104</sup> *Narayani Tanka* and the coins of other rulers of the region had monetized the whole economic structure.

#### 5.4.2. Trade and Commerce

Monetization of economy had its positive impact on the trade and commerce of the region. Trade links with the neighbours and internal trade was a subject of great care for the Koch Kingdom. Contemporary and near-contemporary sources categorically highlighted the trade link of the Koch state with Bhutan, Tibet, Bengal and the Upper Brahmaputra valley.

##### 5.4.2.1. External Trades.

Historically Bhutan was subordinate to the Koches till the reign of Lakshmi Narayan. Contrarily Bhutan established her domination over the Koch kings since the late 17th century. But the trade link continued as usual. As the trade routes passing across the Koch territory to Bhutan and Tibet, the Koch kingdom had enjoyed a sizable profit. The British political missions sent to Bhutan and Tibet (after 1773 A.D.) categorically recorded the trade links between Bengal and Bhutan and Bengal and

Tibet carried through the *Duars* of the Koch state. Bhutan trade is also evident from the account of Ralf Fitch who visited the Koch kingdom in the 1580's.<sup>105</sup>

**Table 5.6:**Export-import trades between Cooch Behar and Bhutan.

Exports to Bhutan.	Woolen cloths, indigo, Maldah cloths, spice, dyes, betel leave and betel nut, tobacco, dry fish, coarse cotton cloths, rice, iron, country gunpowder and <i>endi</i> silk.
Imports from Bhutan.	Musk, cow tails, blankets, woolen cloths, oranges, <i>manjit</i> , walnuts, <i>Tangon</i> horses, Chinese silk, gold dust rock salt and silver.

The trade between the Koch kingdom and Bhutan was reciprocal. Bhutanese traders including the government officials used to bring their articles to the trading centers<sup>106</sup> of Koch kingdom such as Cooch Behar, Rangpur, Dinajpur,<sup>107</sup> Odalguri, Hajo and certain other markets of Assam.<sup>108</sup> Nazirganj and Bhurchungmari (Tufanganj) were the two markets famous for Bhutanese products<sup>109</sup>. Apart from the markets and towns, seasonal fairs held in the Tista-Bharnapurta valley were other major places of commercial transactions. Hajo, Charigaon, Odalguri, (Eastern Koch Kingdom), Pangaw, Badarganj, Haldibari,<sup>110</sup> Jalpesh<sup>111</sup> etc., were the places of fairs where the Bhutanese products were sold seasonally in large scale.

Table 5.6 shows that Bhutan use to import woolen, cotton and silk cloth; cattle, dry fish, tobacco, rice, iron gun powder, dye, etc from thw Koch state. Koch state, on the other hand, had regular imports of musk, cow tails, woolen blanket<sup>112</sup> and cloths, silk, orange, *Tangon* horses, gold dust, rock salt and silver from Bhutan. The King of Bhutan had monopolized the export of *Tangan* horse to the Koch Kingdom.<sup>113</sup>

The traders from Rangpur, Cooch Behar and other parts of Bengal had their regular coomercial transactions with Tibet through Bhutan. The letter of Nirpur Piaga, dated 19th April 1779 A.D. to the East India Company<sup>114</sup>, confirms the prosperity of the Bengal-Tibet trades. This trade relation considerably increased the circulation of *Narayani Tanka* in Bhutan and Tibet and contributed to the easy exports of certain products of the Koch kingdom, like-tobacco, betel leaves, betel nuts, *endi* silk and other cloths.

The *Guru Charita* and *Katha Guru Charita* have mentioned the slave trade between the Koch Kingdom and Bhutan.<sup>115</sup> The prisoners of war and criminals were used sell as mainly as slaves. The *Guru Charita* also claims that two disciples of

Sankardeva were sold to two Bhutanese traders named Hema and Pema at Rs. 120.<sup>116</sup> But they were ultimately released. It was not a sheer exaggerated narrative<sup>117</sup> as Mr. Krishna Kanta Bose, a British ambassador, sent to Bhutan in 1815 found that slaves or *phanchemi* were recruited to kill hogs and other animals which were restricted to the Bhutanese.<sup>118</sup> However, slave trade was not a common feature of the Bhutanese trade.

The trade relations of the Koch Kingdom with other Northeast Indian states and Bengal had been flourished for the demands of certain articles not produced locally and export of surplus products. Jesuit traveler, Stephen Cacella who visited the Kingdom in 1627, had recorded that articles from Patna, Rajmahal and Gauda were supplied frequently to fulfill the internal demands of the state<sup>119</sup>. The cloths produced in Bengal had a great demand in the state.<sup>120</sup> In spite of productions of rock salt and salted water; pure salt was a scare in the Tista-Brahmaputa valley. Salt was an imported item from Bengal<sup>121</sup>. Lower Brahmaputra valley had regular imports of gold, *patkapar* (cloth), *dao-katari* (knife), elephant task and *barkapar* (cloth) from the Upper Brahmaputra valley (Ahom state)<sup>122</sup>.

We have already observed that Koch kingdom had exportable surplus of mustard seeds and oil, tobacco, jute and their sub-products. Tobacco was exported to Burma through Bengal.<sup>123</sup> In spite of availability of wild elephants, its trade never became prosperous as the *Tangan* horse monopolized by the King of Bhutan.

#### 5.4.2.2. Internal Trades

Towns, *hats* and *bandar* were the centers of internal and external exchanges. Stephen Cacella had found many *bazars* (markets) in the state where every thing was available including the imported items.<sup>124</sup> *Bandars*, seat of trade and commerce where the merchants reside permanently having their own farms; were situated on the big river or by the side of the public roads.<sup>125</sup> *Hats* were the public market place lying in the rural areas where people of the neighborhood assembled in the fixed days of week for both selling their products and buying items of daily uses. *Hat* being the small unit of transaction had the chance of direct exchange. From food grains to cattle,

agricultural and fishing instruments were sold in the *hats*. The middlemen had little intervention in the *hats*.

The kingdom had numerous centers of big trades like--Cooch Behar, Rangpur, Khuntaghat, Pandu, Hazo, Chekakhata (Alipur Duar), Rangamati, Balarampur, Gitaldah, Gosain Ganj, etc. Narayan Ganj and Bhurchungmari were the centers of the Bhutanese trades while Rashidanga and Shilkhuri were famous for tobacco trades.<sup>126</sup>

#### 5.4.2.3. Transport

Both land and water routes were in use for transportation of goods. Limited scope of navigation in the hill streams of North Bengal and Assam did not allow the easy transport of merchandise through water routes. Yet the *Brahmaputra* and other big rivers of the plains were not beyond the scope of navigation. George Bogle's report on Bhutan in 1774 records that

'the great rivers *Tista, Manshi, Torsa* and *Raidak*... are navigable for six months of the year as high as within 10 *ks* of the foot of the mountain.'<sup>127</sup>

The *Brahmaputra* is navigable throughout the year and the Persian sources, *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* written in the early 17th century and *Fathiya-i-Ibriya* written in 1663 A.D. have vividly described the navigability of the *Brahmaputra* system. Testimony on the river born trade in the home market particularly during the rainy season is also available from the *Account of Cooch Behar* of Captain Lewin.<sup>128</sup> Alternatives of the limited water-routes were the land routes constructed during the medieval period both by the Khenas and the Koches. Cart, drawn by the buffaloes and bullocks was common transport system prevailed in the region.

#### 5.4.2.4. Trading Communities.

The *Byaparis* were the small traders who used to deal with the articles of daily uses and food grains. Big traders called *saudagar* were engaged in large-scale business. Gold, silver, silk, salt, jewelry, mustard seeds, tobacco and other items of much economic value were handled by the *saudagars*. Unlike Bengal, no particular caste had developed its expertise as trader in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. Traders could be of any caste. Bhabananda Saodagar, a big native merchant<sup>129</sup>; was a Kalita by caste. The foreign trades particularly from Western India<sup>130</sup> mainly carried out large-scale trades. The tribal and the lower caste Hindus had no interest about the trade and commerce.

Trade of any kind was prohibited in the traditional Koch, Mech and Rabha society<sup>131</sup>. Thus the Koch, Mech, Rabha and the Rajbanshis were neither interested nor engaged in the trade.

### 5.5. Koch State Formation and the Economy.

The state formation process of the Koches, like other tribal states of Northeast India had identical phenomena in the transition of mode of production and production relations. While control over wet-rice cultivation enabled the Ahom to form their state,<sup>132</sup> the Koch kingdom is witnessed of the growth of agricultural economy and peasantization of the tribals. Peasantization of the tribes and the 'technological acculturation' in agricultural production had increased the rate of surplus production particularly in the plains of Sub-Himalayan Bengal and Lower Assam. So the colonial reports of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries have recorded the Koch tribe as expert agriculturist in the plains of Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Goalpara, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Kamrup and Maymansingha districts although in the foothills and Duars, together with the Mech tribe they remained confined with the tribal mode of production. Extraction of agricultural surplus by the state and monetization of economy had enabled the state to be free from its dependence to the plunder through aggressive warfare.

The Koch state besides maintaining the traditional methods had adopted certain innovative steps to appropriate the agricultural surplus and exploit the 'labour-value' from the subjects, which eventually feudalized the 'ruled-ruler relationships'. The *poa-bandha* agreement with the professional castes and tribes had further feudalized the process. But introduction of *Narayani Tanka* as common medium of exchange and requirement of ready cash kept the feudal process under state control. Contrarily, monetization of the trade and commerce (inspite of continuity of barter in the remote and peripheral zones) had mobilized the economic growth instead of stagnation.

Acculturation in the industrial technology has been noticed in the adoption of technology and techniques of production of certain crafts by the tribes from the non-tribals. Diffusion of technology from the non-tribals to the tribals had caused occupational mobility of the tribals that increased the rate of production.

Inspite of slow rate in transition of tribalism and tribal mode of production into settled peasantized economy, the state enjoyed every benefits by appropriating the 'surplus and 'services ' and controlling the key of dynamics of monetization of

economy i.e., *Narayani Tanka*. Exploitation of revenues from the possible source of any descriptions had strengthened the economic viability of the state.

### Notes and References.

1. R.L. Carneiro argues that different states arose independently at different historical times in different parts of the world where 'warfare' as a causative plays a significant role in the formation of state (A Theory of the Origin of the State, *Science* 169(1970), pp.733-38; ---The Chiefdom: Precursor of the State, in G. Jones and B.Kautz (eds): *The Transition to Statehood* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp.834-871;----- The Role of Warfare in Political Evolution: Past Results and Future Projections, in G. Ausenela(ed): *Effects of War on Society* (San Marina ,Center for Inter-Disciplinary Research ,1992),pp.81-102 ).On the other hand Elman R. Service stresses on the 'institutionalization of leadership' as a causative of state formation state. Elman R. Service: *Origin of the State and Civilization: The Process of Cultural Evolution*, (New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1975).
2. Most of the writings on the process of cultural change of the Indian tribes have emphasized on the adoption of non-tribal cultural elements by the tribes. The changes have been noticed in the food habits, social customs and religion of the tribe which led the social scientists to build the models like-- *sanskritization* (Suniti Kumar Chatterji: *Kirata Jana Kriti*, Calcutta, Asiatic Society, 1951; M.N. Srinivas: *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*, 1952), *Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption* (N.K. Bose: *Structure of Hindu Society* ,revised ed.,Delhi ,Orient Longman ,1994 ) and *Tribe- Caste-Continuum* for conceptualizing the process of cultural change. But a correlation between the changed/changing mode of production of the tribe and the *sanskritization* in cultural domain is still less discussed. Few theoretical studies on this process, done so far, however are less documented. In case of the Koches, Bhaskar Nandi and Vasanti Raman's study (*The Long Transition: The Koch-Rajbangshis of North-Eastern India*, in Dev Nathan (ed): *From Tribe to Caste*, Shimla, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1997,pp.446-460) is an interesting one .

3. Amalendu Guha : *Medieval and Early Colonial Assam: Society ,Polity Economy*, (Calcutta ,K.P. Bagchi &Co.,1991), pp. 12-14.
4. *Ibid.*,p.12.
5. D.Sunder: *Survey and Settlement of the Western Duars in the District of Jalpaiguri 1889-95*, (Calcutta, Bengal Secretariat Press, 1895), p. 71.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Kamrupar Buranji*, p. 10; *Deodhai Assam Buranji* , p. 127.
8. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 52-54, pp.9-10; *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.10.
9. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 75-77; *Rajopakhyan*, p. 11.
10. R.M.Nath: *The Background of Assamese Culture*, (Shillong, 1948), p.15.
11. *Guru Charita*, vs.96-100, vs.2574-2576,pp. 18, 510.
12. This economic typology of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley can be compared with the pre-colonial African economy which was characterized by the juxtaposition of two apparently contradictory levels--the local subsistence village economy and the commercial economy. Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch: *Research on the African Mode of Production*, in Peter C.W.Gutkind and Peter Waterman (eds): *African Social Studies: A Radical Reader*. (London, Heinemann, 1977), p.81.
13. *Raja Vamsavali*, Ms., (NBSL, Ms. no.04), f.7; Pitambar Siddyantavagis: *Markandeya Purana*, Ms. (NBSL, Ms. no.08)
14. W.W. Hunter: *Statistical Account of Bengal*, reprint ed.,(New Delhi ,Concept Publishing House ,1984), *vol.x* , pp. 92,271,379.
15. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement*, (Cooch Behar, The Cooch Behar State Press, 1903), pp.165-168.
16. J.P.Wade: *An Account of Assam*, edited by Benudhar Sharma, (Lakhim Pur, Madhupur Tea Estate, 1927), p. 186.
17. William Foster: *Early Travels in India*, reprint ed., (Delhi, S. Chand & Co., 1968), p.25.
18. H.Blochmann: Koch Bihar, Koch Hajo and Assam in the 16th and 17th centuries, *JASB*, 71.1(1872). p. 66; C. Wessels (ed): *Early Jesuit Travelers in Central Asia (1603-1721)*, reprint ed., (Madras, Asian Educational Service, 1992), p.128.
19. *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. III, p.136.
20. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, v. 53, p. 9.

21. George Bogle: *Narrative of the Mission of Mr. George Bogle to Tibet (1774 A.D)*, edited by M.R.Clements, (New Delhi, Manjusri Publishing House, 1971), p.55; K.K.Bose: *Account of Bootan (1815)*, in H.K.Kuloy (ed.): *Political Missions to Bootan*, reprint ed., (New Delhi, Manjusri Publishing House, 1972), p.356.
22. See *Plate 5.1*
23. W.W. Hunter: *Statistical Account of Bengal, vol. x*, pp.350- 358; *idem: Statistical Account of Assam, vol., I*, pp.32-33, 117; and *vol. II*, pp.41-42, 116-117.
24. For details about the relationship between the *sanskritization* and technological acculturation see *infra* Chapter VII.
25. Surajit Sinha (ed): *Tribal Polities and State Systems in Pre-colonial Eastern and Northeastern India*, (Calcutta, K.P.Bagchi & Co., 1987), pp.xiv-xv.
26. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *Op. cit.*, p.441.
27. *Ibid*, p.547.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 441-42.
29. *Ibid.*, pp. 442.
30. *Raja Vamsavali*, (NBSL, Ms.no,04), f.9.
31. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed: *Cooch Biharer Itihas*, pp. 174, 187.
32. The term *jabda* derives from an Arabic term *Jabat* is means to keep vivid description of certain matter in exact condition. So *Dhala jabda* means details description about the cultivable land.
33. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op. cit.*, pp. 442 - 547.
34. *Raja Vamsavali*, f.9; Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed: *op. cit.*, p.125. One *bigha* is equivalent to  $1/3$  acre. Or 1 acre = 3 *bighas*. So 1 *pura* = 1.33 acre.
35. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op. cit.*, p.442.
36. Although there was variation in the assessment and collection of land revenue in the Mughal Empire,  $1/3$  of the gross production was the general rate. Akbar fixed  $1/3^{rd}$  of the gross produce as state demand that had been applied in the major part of the empire. (I.H.Qureshi: *The Administration of the Mughal Empire*, reprint ed., New Delhi, 1990, p.170) .In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the rate of the land revenue under the Mughals had been varied from  $1/4$  to  $1/2$  of the gross

- production. But  $\frac{1}{2}$  rate constitute the maximum collection. (Noman Ahmed Sidiqi: *Land Revenue Administration Under the Mughals, 1700-1750*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1970, p.47). For more details about the 'land revenue collection' of the Mughals, see- Shirin Moosvi: *Economy of the Mughal Empire c 1595: A Statistical Study*,( Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1987), pp.95-118; Irfan Habib : *The Agrarian System in Mughal India (1526-1707)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised ed., (New Delhi ,Oxford University Press ,1999),pp.230-297.
37. H. Blochman: *loc. cit.*, p. 87.
  38. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op. cit.*, p. 355.
  39. *Rajopakhyan*, p. 49.
  40. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op.cit.*, pp. 442-43.
  41. Territories conquered by the Koches (in the 16th century) paid tribute to the Koches. Charges of revenue collection had been left to the respective states. But the territories lost to the Mughals by Parikshit Narayan, Lakshmi Narayan and Rup Narayan and other Koch rulers were left under the Koch representatives to collect revenue.
  42. The term *jamabandi* signifies that the Koches adopted the mode of revenue assessment from the Mughals.
  43. *Assam Buranji (1648-1681)*, p.14.
  44. *Rajopakhyan*, pp. 37-38; Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op.cit.*, p . 241.
  45. Jagadindra Dev Raikat: *Raikat Bangsa O Tahader Rajyer Sanschipta Bibaran*, edited by Nirmal Chandra Chaudhuri,(Jalpaiguri ,1982), p. 23.
  46. The Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II had issued a forman dated 12<sup>th</sup> August 1765 by which the East India Company got the *Dewani of Bengal*, Bihar and Orrissa. Hence the revenues for the *parganas* (of the Koch state) possessed by the Mughals no came under the Company's jurisdiction.
  47. *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, vol. II, p.522.
  48. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*. v. 688, pp. 138-39.
  49. *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*, vol. II, p.522.
  50. Jadunath Sarkar: *History of Aurangazeb, (5vols.)*, reprint ed.,(Calcutta ,Orient Longman Ltd., 1972), vol. III, p. 218.
  51. H. Blochmann: *loc., cit.* p. 66.

52. Rev.J.Long: *Selection from Unpublished Records of Governement for the Years 1748-1776*, edited by Mahadev Prasad Saha, (Calcutta, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhaya,1973),p.715.

Mahi Narayan (son of Lakshmi Narayan) was appointed as *Nazir* by Lakshmi Narayan. He held the *chhatra* (royal umbrella) during the coronation ceremonies of Bir Narayan, Prana Narayan and Moda Narayan because the *Raikat* denied to perform this duty attached to this ceremony, and the *Nazir* subsequently came to be designated as *Chhatra Nazir*. Although the *Raikat* revived the old tradition of holding the *chhatra* by selecting Vasudeva Narayan (1680-1682) as king after the death of Moda Narayan (1665-1680) but practically *Nazir Deo* or *Chhatra Nazir* enjoyed unchallenged power and authority in the administration. With the selection of Rup Narayan as king (1693-1714) from the family of *Chatra Nazir*, the tradition of selection of the king from the royal blood was delinked. The *Chhatra Nazir* (Santa Narayan) and *Dewan Deo* (head of the civil affair) got the direct access to enjoy the land-revenue for their duties as the states administrations. *Nazir Deo* established his office at Balarampur and *Dewan* at Baramkhana, respectively, and they had temporary camps in the capital. During the minority of King Devendra Narayan (1763-65) and next king Dhairendra Narayan (1765-70), the *Nazir* extended his control over the enjoyment of the land. After the conclusion of the *Anglo-Cooch Behar Treaty* (1773) it has been found that the *Nazir* and *Dewan* had large tracts of land under their control. Mr. Purling in his statistics of revenue (*hastabood*) found the tripartite land structure of Cooch Behar. The *parganas* such as Baladanga, Bakalimari, Sitai, Pinjirarjhar, Lalabazar, Abuar Pathar, Lakshmipur, Bhitari Bihar and Mahonpur, were under the possession of the king. The *Nazir* had the possession of Dakuar hat, Gitaldah, Rampur, Chakla Purba Bhag and Rahim Ganj *parganas*. The *Dewan* had the possession of one *pargana* only (Patchara). The locations of the *parganas* have been illustrated in the *Map 3 and 4*.

53. *Raja Vamsavali*, Ms.(NBSL MS.no 04),f.9.

54. The whole male population except the noble, priest and the person of high castes between the ages 15 and 50 were liable to serve the state. They were known as *paik* in the Ahom state. 3 or 4 *paiks* constitute one unit called *got* to continue the

- service to the state without interruption. For details, see N.K.Bose: *Assam in the Ahom Age*, (Calcutta, Sanaskrit Pustak Bhandar, 1970),pp. 113-115.
55. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri :*op.cit.*,pp.546-47.
  56. *Ibid.*
  57. *Ibid.*,508. Interest of the Koch state to bring fresher land under cultivation was identical with the Mughal policy of encouraging the peasants to bring fallow land under cultivation .The Mughals laid down a graduated system of assessment for breaking the waste land The normal rate of assessment reached to these land in the fifth years. Advances ere also given to the cultivators in order to enable them to defray the initial cost of the change. R.C.Majumder (Gen. ed): *The History and Culture of the Indian People, Mughal Empire*, 2nd ed., (Bombay, Bharatiya Vidhya Bavan, 1984), p.533.
  58. Hari Narayan Dutta Barua: *Chitra Bhagavat*,( Nalbari ,1949), p. 1.
  59. Sunil Pal: Mech Jatir Endi Silpa, *Amrita- 12.30(1972)*, p.306.
  60. Bhagavati Charan Bandyopadhaya: *Cooch Biharer Itihas* (Cooch Behar State Press, 1884), edited by Nripendra Nath Pal (Calcutta, Anima Prakashani, 1987), p.19.
  61. See **Plate 5.2 and 5.3.**
  62. Chakrabarty Jadav Chandra: *Koch Biharer Itihas*, reprinted in Pal Nripendra Nath (ed.): *Bishay Cooch Behar*, (Calcutta, Anima Prakashani, 1994), p.36.
  63. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, v. 263. p 52.
  64. Haliram Mohanta: *Sankar Charita* (Sualkuchi, 1925), vs. 3506 - 07, p.275.
  65. *Ibid.*, vs. 3509-10, p.275.
  66. D. Nath: *op. cit.*, p. 151.
  67. Montgomery Martin: *Eastern India (5 vols.)*, reprint ed., (Delhi, Cosmo Publications, 1976), vol. 5. *Rangpur and Assam*, p. 553; Haliram Dekial Phukan: *Assam Buranji*, edited by Jatindra Mahun Bhattacharyya, (Gauhati, Mokshda Pustakalaya, 1369 B.S.), p. 88.
  68. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri:*op. cit.*, p.154.
  69. *Ibid.*
  70. Birinchi Kumar Barua: *History of Assamese Literature*, (New Delhi, Sahitya Academy, 1964), p.39.

71. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, v. 261, p. 52.
72. *Raja Vamsavali*, f.9.
73. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op. cit.*, p.191.
74. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
75. Haliram Dhekial Phukan :*op.cit.*, p. 104.
76. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, v. 260, p. 51.
77. *Ibid.*, v. 259, p.51.
78. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op. cit.*, p.155.
79. Montgomery Martin: *Eastern India*, vol.5, p. 678;Buchanan Hamilton: *An Account of Kamrupa*, p. 62.
80. See Plate 5.4.and 5.4.
81. *Rajopakhyan.*,p.112.
82. Haliram Dhekial Phukan :*op. cit.*, p. 91.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
84. Montgomery Martin: *Eastern India*, vol.5, p. 678; Buchanan Hamilton: *An Account of Kamrupa*, p. 62.
85. W.W. Hunter: *Statistical Account of Bengal*, vol. x, p. 344.
86. Haliram Dherial Phukan: *op. cit.*, p. 88.
87. Francis Buchanan: An Account of Kamrup, in S.K. Bhuiyan (ed.); *Kamrupar Buranji*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., (Guwahati, DHAS, 1987), p. 62.
88. Daityari Thakur: *Mahapurush Sri Sankardeva and Madhav Devar Chiban Charita*, edited by H.N Datta Barua (Nalbari, 1978), v. 1251.
89. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 259, pp.51-52.
90. Cowry cell was a common medium of exchange in Bengal and Assam. The pre-Koch Brahmaputra valley largely utilized the cowries in local exchanges, which continued to be circulated even after the introduction of the *Narayani Tanka*. N.G. Rhodes and Sankar K. Bose: *The Coinage of Assam, vol. 1. Pre-Ahom Period*. (Dhubri, Library of Numismatic Studies, 2003), pp.57-64.
91. The gold coins of the Varman dynasty had been discovered at Paglalik near Goalpara (N.G.Rhodes and Sankar K.Bose: *The Coinage of Assam, Vol.I*, pp.12-18). The copper coins issued by the rulers of the *Mleccha* dynasty of the 9th century have been noticed from several find spots (pp27-45). The sliver coins

were circulated in the Tista- Brahmaputra valley, particularly of the *Kachari coins*.

92. J.P. Singh: *Monetary Development in Early Assam*. (Jorhat, 1989), p. 20.
93. N.G Rhodes and Sankar K. Bose: *The Coinage of Assam*, p, 27.
94. N.G.Rhodes and Sankar K. Bose: *Coinage of Cooch Behar*, (Dhubri, Library of Numismatic Studies, 1999), pp. 74-85.
95. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*. v. 839, p. 89; *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.12.
96. *Ibid.*, v. 819. p.85.
97. N.G.Rhodes and Sankar K.Bose : *Coinage of Cooch Behar*, pp.9-10.
98. H. Blochmann: *loc cit* .p. 66.
99. Harendra Narayan Choudhuri :*Op. cit* .,pp.266-68.
100. N.G.Rhodes and Sankar K.Bose: *Coinage of Cooch Behar*, pp.27-28.
101. R.B. Pemberton: Report on Bootan,(1837-38),reprinted in H.K.Kuloy (ed): *Political Missions to Bootan* ,reprint ed.,(New Delhi ,Manjusri Publishing House ,1972), p.355.
102. *Ibid.*, p. 212.
103. K.K.Bose: *op. cit.*, p.310; Haliram Dhekial Phukan: *op.cit.* p.77;Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri:*op.cit* ,p.268; Khan Chowdhuri Amanatulla Ahmed: *op. cit.*, p. 291;N.G. Rhodes : Cooch Behar Coins Used in Bhutan, in Pranab Kumar Bhattacharyya (ed.): *Kamata- Cooch Behar in Historical Perspective*. (Calcutta, Ratna Prakashan, 2000), pp.148-154; D.Nath: *op.cit.*, p.158;
104. George Bogle: *op. cit.*, pp. 55 and 59.
105. William Foster (ed): *Early Travels in India 1583-1619*, reprint ed.,(Delhi ,S.Chand & Co.,1968) p. 27.
106. K.K. Bose: *op. cit.*, p.350. George Bogle: *op. cit.*, p.51.
107. Mr. George Bogle recorded on October 11, 1774, that the Bhutanese caravans previously use to go as far as Dinajpur. George Bogle: *op. cit.*, p. 52.
108. George Bogle: *op. cit.*, pp. 51, 53-55; K.K. Bose: *op. cit.*, p. 350; B.R. Pemberton: *op.cit*, pp.224-225, 162-163.
109. Ananda Chandra Ghosh: *Cooch Behar Itihas*, edited by Ananda Gopal Ghosh and Narayan Saha (Darjeeling, Uttarbanga Itihas Prakashana Parishad, 1990), p. 8.

110. *The Cooch Behar Gazette, Monday, November 8(1857), p.89.*
111. D.Sunder: *Survey and Settlement of the Western Duars, p.29.*
112. Wollen blanket of Bhutan (*Bhot Kambal*) was very popular not only in Cooch Behar but also in mediaeval Bengal. Krishnadas Kaviraj: *Sri Sri Chaitanya Charitamrita, 9th ed., (Calcutta, Basumati Sahitya Mandir, 1386 B.S.), p.211.*
113. K.K. Bose :*op. cit., p.350.*
114. *Letter dated 9th Pouse 1185 B.S. produced in S.N. Sen (ed.): Prachin Bangla Patra Sankalan (Calcutta, Calcutta University, 1942), Letter no. 1.p.1.*
115. *Guru Charita, vs. 3488-35-8, p.141.*
116. *Ibid. vs. 3488, p. 693.*
117. B.P.Misra: Early History of Bhutan, *Himalayan Miscellany, I(March 1987) ,p.8.*
118. K.K. Bose: *op. cit. p.161.*
119. C. Wessels (ed): *Early Jesuit traveler in Central Asia, pp. 127-128.*
120. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri :*op. cit., p.192.*
121. Dhekial Phukan: *op. cit., p.105; Jagadidra Dev Narayan Raikat: op. cit.p.6; H. Blochmann: loc. cit., p. 77.*
122. *Katha Gurucharita, p.108.*
123. Jadav Chandra Chakrabarty :*op. cit., p.33.*
124. George Bogle: *op. cit., p. 55.*
125. W.W. Hunter: *Statistical Account of Bengal Vol.X, p.360.*
126. C.W. Wessels :*op. cit., p.28.*
127. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op. cit., p.123.*
128. Ananda Chandra Ghosh: *op. cit., p. 8.*
129. *Guru Charita, vs. 2751-2836, pp.546-63; Pranab Kumar Bhattacharyya: Eitihāsik Prekashapte Kamata-Koch Rajvamsa O Tar Kichu Samashya, in Pranab Kumar Bhattacharyya(ed): Kamata- Cooch Behar in Historical Perspective. (Calcutta, Ratna Prakashan, 2000), p.45.*
130. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op. cit., p, 192; W.W.Hunter: Staistical Account of Bengal, vol. x ,pp. 398-99.*
131. Bhabesh Narzi: *Bado Kacharir Swamaj Aru Sanskriti, reprint ed.,(Guwahati , 2001),p. 43; Kameswar Brahma : A Study of Socio-Religious Beliefs of the*

*Bodos with Special References to the Bodos of Kokrajhar District* ,(Calcutta ,Puthi Pustak ,1992),p.14.

132. Romesh Buragohain: *Presidential Address*, 21st Session, North East India History Association, Imphal, 2000, published in the Proceeding of North East India History Association, Twenty-first Session,(Shillong ,NEHU,2000) pp.3-8.

## Chapter VI

### Centralization of Power, Institutionalization of Leadership and Administration.

Establishment of law and order, integration of the state, protection of the state from the external aggression and linkage with a divine origin of the kingship are essential prerequisite of pre-colonial Indian states <sup>1</sup>. In the Koch kingdom, these causatives were materialized by a process of gradual elimination of tribal control over the chieftom. Simultaneously controlling the ruled, including tribe and non-tribe; by a small ruling section comprising the chief and the tribal village leaders; had enforced the process of centralization of power. Legitimization of kingship through 'an imaginary divine link', formation of an organized bureaucracy, maintenance of sovereignty and centralization of power in the capital had virtually transformed the tribal chieftom of the Koch and Mech tribes into a state system. Transition of the tribal chieftom to a state had initiated the process of hierarchical sociopolitical stratification in the less-stratified tribal society.

#### 6.1. Centralization of Power.

Prior to their state formation, traditional structure of the tribal society of the Koches and Meches was based on the clan villages connected through lineage and kinship. The clan-village leaders were dependent to their chief for overall progress of the tribe. Reciprocity in relationships between the tribe and the village leaders and redistribution of collected tributes by the chief through rituals had typologically placed the Koch and Mech tribes in a pre-state stage where chief was controlled by the clan, kin and lineage. Mech chief used to be selected by the village leaders and the chief had to host a great feast for the tribe <sup>2</sup> and the Koches had a similar tradition. Leadership of Haria Mandal as chief and integrator of the Mech tribe and appropriation of contemporary political situation of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley had led the tribe to form a chieftom of visible entity. Haria Mandal was successful to begin the process of institutionalization of leadership at least to elect his son Visu as the next chief.

Territorial expansion, collection of booties, defence and management of the territory had raised the question of managerial function of the emerging state. Chief and his allies came forward to assume the responsibility of management. Visu, as the chief of the tribe had acquired support from the autonomous tribal villages. His leadership in the warfare against the Bhuiyans<sup>3</sup> had enhanced more prestige to him. The clan leaders were appointed as *karzi* or officials and ministers.<sup>4</sup> Brother of Visvasimha was employed as the protector of the fort or *Raikat*. These institutions of *kingship*, *karziship* and *raikatship* were declared hereditary which constitute a ruling section within the tribe. Ruling section gradually centralized more power into its fold. So the tribal control over the clan leaders and the chief begun to replace by the ruling section's control over the tribe. So 'it was a symbiosis of state formation process and formation of a ruling section within the tribe.'

### 6.1.1 Origin of the Kingship

According to the *Rajopakhyan*, Chandan (c1510 A.D.) was the first Koch king but no description of his coronation has been found in other literary sources. On the contrary, Visu was declared as 'king Visvasimha',<sup>5</sup> after performing the rituals of coronation at per pre-modern king of India. Such declaration, however, was not unquestionable. Unlike the pre-Koch dynasties of Kamarupa (which connected their kingship with the traditional heroes, like -- Naraka and Bhagadatta), the Koch kings attached their kingship with Lord Shiva. A number of miraculous tales about Visvasimha's extraordinary origin were grown up. He was declared as the son of Lord Shiva, not of humble Haria Mech. The Brahmins were invited and endowed with land and honour by Visvasimha<sup>6</sup> who had rewarded him the high sounding titles and recognized him as *kshatriya* ruler. The chronicles and *vamsavalis* have fairly mentioned the following myths to prove the miraculous progeny to the Koch kings.

"One day Haria Mandal, chief of twelve villages of Chikina hill of Lower Assam, after hard working in the *jhum* field (shifting cultivation) was waiting for food and drink to be brought by his wife Hira. But in her way, Hira was cheated by the duplicity of Lord Mahadeva, and had an intercourse with him. She was embarrassed while hungry Haria Mech blamed Hira for not bringing the food for him. Haria was puzzled but got the solution in dream while Mahadeva told him

that 'I enjoyed your wife and as a result a great child will be born who will be famous as Visvasimha'.<sup>7</sup>

Thus real patrimony of Visvasimha was exaggerated and attempts were also made to propagate myths to popularize his kingship.

'Visu used to be protected from the hit of sunlight by a poisonous snake in the jungle of Chikina hill while he was engaged in cattle rearing'.<sup>8</sup> And 'Visu had sacrificed a tribal boy to the goddess Bhagavati only by using a wild leaf as sword'.<sup>9</sup>

These myths and tales had justified the ability of leadership of Visvasimha as king. The tale of snake which is equally connected with the Khena king of the same region and many other tribal kings of Eastern and Northeast India;<sup>10</sup> had the easy access to the common psychology of the subject. The sacrificial story was further carried out which got attachment with Nara Narayan and Chilarai.<sup>11</sup>

Visvasimha's kingship having a divine connection did not face any challenge from the ruled. But further warfare, territorial expansion and centralization of power carried out by Nara Narayan also required his divine qualities. Thus all the chronicles and genealogies of the Koch kings categorically mentioned that

'being jealous to Nara Narayan, Chilarai, general of the Koch militia, decided to overthrow the king. But surprisingly, he found that goddess Bhagavati was protecting the king. Chilarai got repentance for this offence and explained the incident to Nara Naryan. Nara Narayan was surprised and puzzled but pacified in the dream when Bhagavati appeared before him and advised him to propagate her worship in the region with a special form'.<sup>12</sup>

It is likely that the propagation of such myths had given a meaning to the concept of kingship that was essential for an emerging sovereign power. By the reign of Nara Narayan, kingship of the Koch rulers got natural acceptance from the ruled as no miraculous tale is attached to the subsequent rulers.

Coronation of the king in Hindu style had elevated the tribal identity to the kingship as per Indian tradition. As the Brahmins had sole right of defining caste status of the Hindus, encompassed by the Brahmans i.e., *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra*; the Koch kings were rewarded high seconding title by the Brahmins. For example,

Visvasimha and his successors had the access to be compared with the popular gods like *Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, Indra, Aditi, Vayu, Varuna, Kuvera* and *Ganesh*.<sup>13</sup> The Brahmins also upgraded the status of the Koch kings and in this matter Nara Narayan was fortunate when he was mentioned in some inscriptions of the Koch kings at par with the epic heroes of ancient India like-- Arjuna, Dadhichi, Karna and Kandarpa.<sup>14</sup> As a matter of fact in addition to a superior status, the Brahmins were rewarded with the 'rent-free land grants' and higher posts in the state bureaucracy<sup>15</sup>.

Transformation of tribal chiefship into a kingship had delinked the king from the tribal control. On the contrary, the king established his control over the tribe. So the first stage of centralization of power was the creation of fictitious divine kingship attached to the Koch kings. Adoption of Hindu titles such as *Simha* and *Narayan* and coronation ceremonies performed by the Brahmins had elevated the social status of the tribal ruler to the ruling caste status i.e. *kshtriya*.

The king had the topmost position in the administrative hierarchy. He was the integrator of the tribal and non-tribal subjects, defender of the state and promoter of the civil administration. The king, by his administrative organs like--*Chhatra Nazir, Raikat, Dewan* and *Karzis* maintained his control over the militia and civil administration.

### 6.1.2.Raikat

*Raikat* was the essential part of the ruling section of tribe and next to the king in importance. Charge of defence of the kingdom was entrusted to the *Raikat* with considerable military strength. Protection of the frontiers, security of forts and commanding the army were his main duties. His office was established at Baikunthapur situated in the western frontier of the Koch kingdom.

First *Raikat* was Sisvasimha,( brother of king Visvasimha)<sup>16</sup>. Afterwards the *Raikat* was also described as prime minister in the colonial records<sup>17</sup> but he had the direct control over the king. It was compulsory for the early Koch kings to get permission of the *Raikat* in their coronation. It became a tradition that the *Raikat* would hold the *Raja Chhatra* (royal umbrella) in the coronation of the king. So the institution of the *Raikat* was a negative side for the concentration of political power by the king.

Military power of the *Raikat* placed him as an emblem of challenge to the king. After the death of Lakshmi Narayan, the *Raikat* did not hold the *chhatra* during the

coronation of the next king Bir Narayan (1627- 1632 A.D.?).<sup>18</sup> On the contrary, *Raikat* himself become independent from the king's control and even established his influence on the state politics during the internal strife in the ruling house.<sup>19</sup>

The post of *Raikat* became hereditary to the successors of Sisvasimha. No other tribal chief or any member from the ruling family could become *Raikat*. The military services rendered by the *Raikat* had contributed to the territorial extension, protection of the conquered (and core) territory. *Raikat*, on the other hand enjoyed hereditary office and few estates were allotted for his maintenance. So it was a symbiotic relationship between the kingship and the *Raikatship* in the process of centralization of political power.

### 6.1.3.Karzis

Questions of managerial functions of the extended territories and core area led to the formation and growth of another vital group of institutions in the Koch state which were filled by the leaders of the clan villages of the tribes who were the active participants in the aggressive warfare of Visvasimha. After the declaration of the tribal chief as the king these leaders were appointed in the services of the state with responsibility, dignity and power and were designated as *Karzi*.<sup>20</sup> They were Bhakura Karzi, Paro, Nichila, Churchal, Satananda, Megha, Purandra, Bhota, Biru, Sharanam, Harish Chandra and Ripurjay Karzi.<sup>21</sup> *Karziship* became hereditary to their family.<sup>22</sup> The *Karzis* served the state as ministers and the important state offices. Supports of the *Karzis* to the king had strengthened the process of centralization of power because the *Karzis* had their control over the clans living in the grassroots level. So the office of the *Karzi* and its functions were instrumental in enhancing the state control over the subject.

### 6.1.4.Nazir

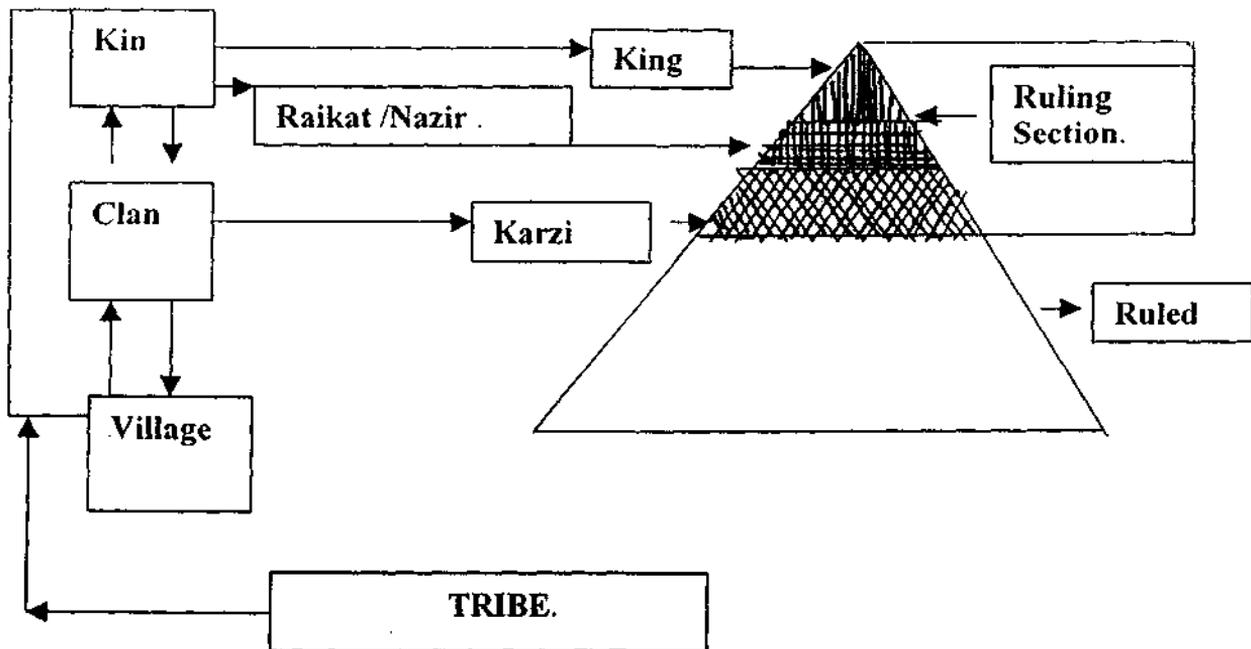
The post of *Nazir* in the administration was an innovation of the Koches. In the early years of the Koch state formation, the *Nazirs* were appointed from the Brahmin caste.<sup>23</sup> King Lakshmi Narayan had appointed his son Mahi Narayan to the post of *Nazir*.<sup>24</sup> Since then the *Nazirship* was enjoyed by the ruling family.

The *Nazir* had the duties to look after the military affairs of the state. When the *Raikat* denied to perform his assigned duty to hold the *chhatra* and ceased the military

duty to the state the *Nazir* began to perform the services of the *Raikat*. Hence, for holding the *chhatra*, the *Nazir* came to be designated as *Chhatra Nazir*.<sup>25</sup>

Since the reign of King Bir Narayan (1627-1632 A.D.), *Chhatra Nazir* became the 'king maker'<sup>26</sup> and military department begun to be controlled by him. However, King Prana Narayan (1632-65 A.D.) restored the king's control over the *Nazir*. But *Chhatra Nazir* Mahi Narayan and Yagna Narayan had their coveted eyes to the Koch throne. Hence, with the Bhutanese help, they tried their best to capture the throne in the last quarter of the 17th century A.D.. After the death of King Moda Narayan (1665-1680) Jagna Narayan as the *Chhatra Nazir* attempted to capture the Koch throne<sup>27</sup> in 1680. But timely intervention of the *Raikat* had expelled him from the kingdom. After the death of King Mahindra Narayan (1682-93) without issue, the *Chhatra Nazir* once again aspired to ascend to the throne. But due to the opposition of the Koch army, instead of the *Nazir*, his nephew Rup Narayan was installed as king<sup>28</sup>. So this single incident was a landmark in the history of the Kamata-Koch kingdom because the accession of Rup Narayan had broken the tradition of selection of the king from the royal blood.

Figure 6.1: Tribe, ruling section and the ruled.



The *Chhatra Nazir* had his office at Balarampur and control over the army as the commander-in-chief. The *Nazir*, being a salaried officer, enjoyed vast tract of land for the maintenance of state-army<sup>29</sup>. During the survey of land (after the conclusion of the Anglo-Cooch Behar Treaty in 1773 A.D.), the East India Company found that the *Nazir* had direct possession of the *Parganas* like Dakurhat, Gitaldah, Rampur and Chakla Purbhabhag Rahimganj<sup>30</sup> which were subsequently treated as *Naziran land*.

#### 6.1.5. Dewan

Civil administration of the kingdom had been entrusted to the *Dewan*, which was next to the king in dignity and position. First *Dewan* of the state was Chilarai whose designation was *Chhoto Raja*.<sup>31</sup> But the *Dewanship* was not confined to the ruling family only. Nara Narayan appointed the *Dewans* from the *Kayastha* caste who proved their efficiency in that post.<sup>32</sup> Prana Narayan appointed Kavi Sekhar and Kavi Narayan as the *Dewan* for the civil administration of the state who continued to serve the state during the reign of Moda Narayan (1665-1680 A.D.) too.<sup>33</sup>

Death of King Mahindra Narayan (1682-93) without successor had created an internal conflict in the ruling section of the kingdom. Finally the family of *Chhatra Nazir* established its domination and *Dewanship* was entrusted to Satya Narayan, a member of the *Nazir* family. Since then *Dewanship* became the monopoly of the ruling tribe and his office at Baramkhana became a sub-centre of political power<sup>34</sup>

#### 6.2. Centralization of the Power: Role of the State Capital.

The Koches and the Meches although started their political formation in the Lower Assam but Cooch Behar and its vicinity was the nucleus of the polity. After the division of the kingdom in 1587A.D., eastern part was virtually annexed to the Ahom kingdom. So Cooch Behar always remained the main capital of the Koch kingdom.

Kamatapur, being the capital of the pre-Koch ruling tribe (Khenas), had its situational advantages as the political center of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. Visvasimha shifted his capital from the hilly region of Khuntaghat (Lower Assam) and Hingulabus<sup>35</sup> (Western Duars) then to Kamatapur.<sup>36</sup> Transfer of capital from the circumscribed hill tracts to the plains of the Karatoya -Brahmaputra valley had extended the political control of the Koches. It also facilitated the concentration of the agricultural surplus and stimulated the state formation process.

Further warfare and territorial expansion from Kamatapur by Nara Narayan had raised the question of practical control over the conquered territories. Accordingly, Khaspur (Kachhar) was preferred as an 'administrative center' to look after the political affairs of the tribal states of Northeast India subdued earlier by the Koch's.

The division of the kingdom (in 1587 A.D.) had created an alternative of Kamatapur at Hajo (Ghila Vijaypur).<sup>37</sup> Inter-Koch conflicts ultimately compelled King Lakshmi Narayan to build a new capital at Atharakota (Cooch Behar), which was maintained by King Bir Nara Narayan.<sup>38</sup> Since then, Cooch Behar became the permanent political center of the state.

Capital (*Bihar* or *Nija Bihar*) was the nucleus of the state with a *Dewan*, treasury, mint and offices of the others institutions. Although, in the early 18th century, the *Nazir* (*Chhatra Nazir*) and *Dewan Deo* had their separate offices at their residences (beyond the capital), they kept their branch offices at the capital for smooth and easy communications. The policy of establishing head quarters or semi head quarters for administration other than the capital was a unique phenomenon of this kingdom as these measures were taken up to ensure the defence and security of the state as a whole.

### **6.3. Institutionalization of Leadership and State Formation.**

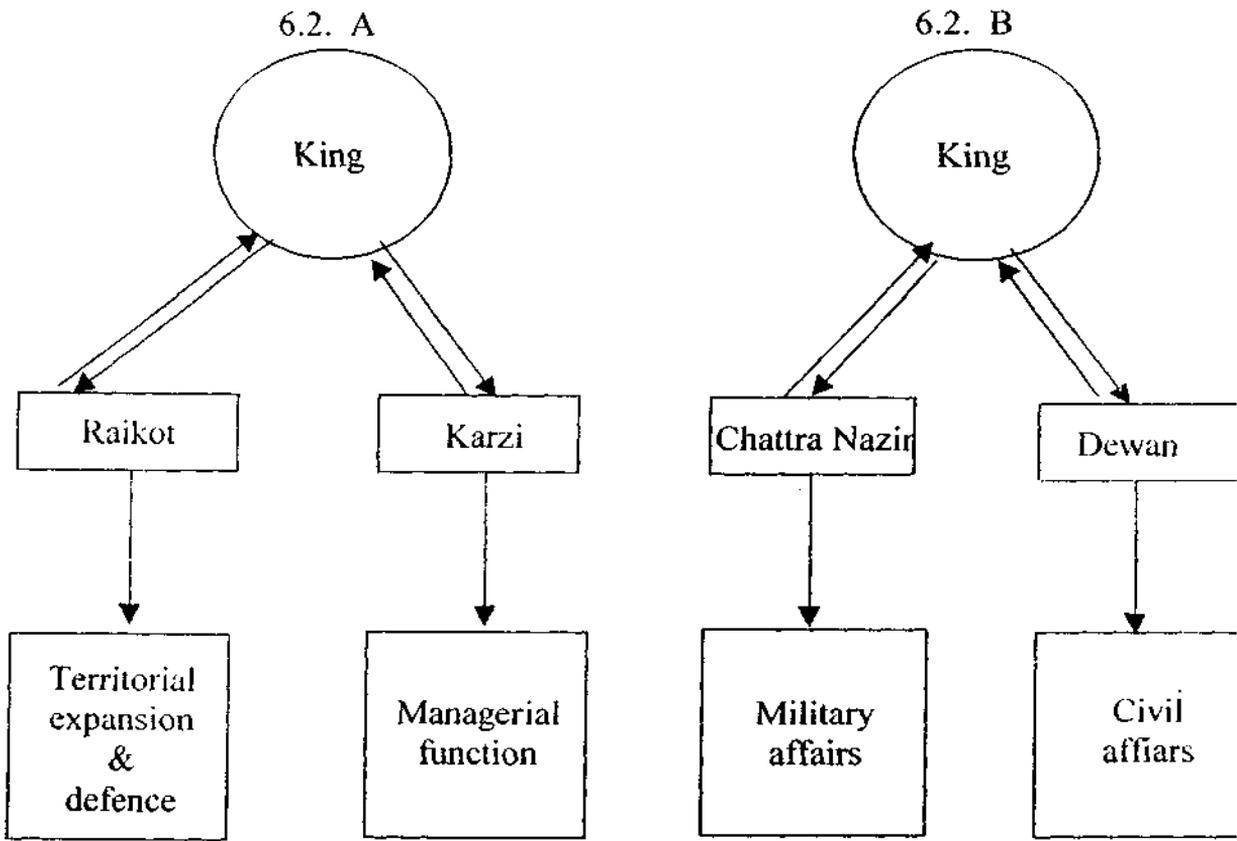
The whole process of formation of the managerial groups in the state shows that 'institutionalization of leadership' and 'concentration of power' goes together through the creation of a ruling section from the ruling tribes. The chiefship was transformed into the kingship with hereditary rights. The king, on the other hand, was dependent on the clan leaders who were appointed as *Karzi*. Similarly, defence of the state was entrusted to the leader of the same tribe in the form of the *Raikat*. So three institutions of the state had concentrated the political power, which was responsible for over all progress of the state including the maintenance of law and order, sovereignty and integration of the state. With the division of the consolidated state, new institutions were created. So since the late 17th Century King, *Chhatra Nazir* and *Dewan* had centralized the power, who provided leadership in the state formation (as explained in the **figure 6.2.**).

### **6.4. Administration**

Warfare, centralization of power in the capital, institutionalization of leadership and development of complexity in the state-structure had created several posts in the

administration. Impact of the traditional administrative machinery of the pre-Koch polities of the region, induction from the administration of the neighbouring power and innovative administrative arrangements were the fundamental features of the administration of the Koch state.

Figure 6.2. Institutionalization of leadership and state formation.



#### 6.4.1. Ministers and Counselors

Beside the *Raikat*, *Nazir* and *Dewan*; the king had few other supportive institutions such as the ministers and the counselors. At the initial stage of state formation ministers were recruited from the tribe. Visvasimha appointed Barihana and Baihagu<sup>39</sup>, two Mech leaders, as minister. The ministers were often called *Patras*<sup>40</sup> and *Amatyas*<sup>41</sup>. *Patras* and ministers had to perform military service too. So Bhimbal Patra and Bahubal Patra served the Koch militia in 1562-63 A.D. against the Ahoms.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Kabindra Patra had rendered military duties to Raghudeva Narayan

and Parikshit Narayan.<sup>43</sup> On the other hand, the *Karzis* had served the state as the ministers and commander of the army.<sup>44</sup>

The ministers were also recruited from the non-tribal castes, generally from the Brahmins and *Kayasthas* particularly in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The *Khashnabish* (chief secretary to the king) often served the state as prime minister particularly during the minority of the king<sup>45</sup>.

The *Rajguru* and the *Daivagnas* (astrologers) were the chief counselors of the state. The *Rajguru* had a great role to perform in the palace and royal family including the court politics. The Brahmins became the chief spiritual mentors for the king in the 18th century<sup>46</sup> although the Vaishnava saints were the *Rajgurus* for the state in the early period of the Koch rule. Next to the *Rajguru* was the *Daivagna* who was supposed to predict the future of the state. The state also maintained the *dyutas* (enjoy) and *kataki* (ambassadors)<sup>47</sup> who served the state as counselors for the foreign affairs.

#### 6.4.2. Military Administration.

Ceaseless warfare for both territorial expansion and defence of the state led to the development of the Koch militia. Extraction of military services from the tribal clan leaders by Visvasimha, Nara Narayan and other Koch kings had forged direct relation of the state with the tribes. Thus Nara Narayan had to avoid confrontation with the tribal beliefs and customs.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, peasantry both tribal and non-tribal, had rendered military services to the state as *paik* in terms of enjoying rent-free land. It was a dependence of the state to the tribals and peasantry<sup>49</sup>.

The *paiks* constituted the basis of Koch army who had to render military and other services required by the state. The *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* has given an exaggerated figure of 5225000 *paiks*<sup>50</sup> that was, however, not the total strength of the militia under Visvasimha and Nara Narayan. Lakshmi Narayan, however, had 100000 infantry.<sup>51</sup> The figure of *paiks* was reduced in accordance with the decrement of territorial size the kingdom in subsequent years.

Cavalry, elephantry and navy were three regular units of the Koch militia which had been developed since the time of Nara Narayan. Horses were not available locally. Bhutan was the chief supplier of horses where trade of *Tangan* horses was the monopoly business of the state. It was the efficiency of the Koches in cavalry that

helped Chilarai (Koch general) to defeat the Ahoms and other Northeast Indian states as explained in the Chapter IV. Lakshmi Narayan had 1000 cavalry <sup>52</sup>.

Availability of wild elephants and possibility of utilization of the elephants in the adverse and impregnable geographical locations led to the growth of elephantry in the Koch army. Lakshmi Narayan had the strength of 700 elephantry <sup>53</sup>. Elephantry was, however, maintained by the Koch kings till their last days. The navigability of the rivers of the region had its impact on the formation of navy. Koch navy was small in size and comparatively weaker than the Ahoms and the Mughals. <sup>54</sup>

The Koch militia had a hierarchical order. Visvasimha had introduced hierarchical military services consisting *Thakuria* (superintend of the 20 ordinary *paiks*), *Saikia* (Commander of 100 *paiks*), *Hazarika* (Commander of 1000 *paiks*), *Omra* (Commander in charge of 3000 *paiks*) *Nawab* (Equivalent to 22 *Omra* =66000 *Paiks*.) and *Raikat* (Commander-in-chief) <sup>55</sup>. These posts are identical with the military system of the Ahoms <sup>56</sup>. However, *Raikat* was an innovation of the Koches for local features of the state. Nara Narayan and Chilarai had carried out further reforms in the military administration. Infantry, navy and guerilla technique became more systematic. Nara Narayan also employed the trained Rajput, Afghans, Mughals and Bhutanese troops in the militia. <sup>57</sup>

**Table 6.1.:** Military order of Koches under Visvasimha.

Sl. no	Designation	Status	Functions(s)
1.	<i>Thakuria</i>	<i>Superintendent of 20 paiks.</i>	Military service to the state.
2.	<i>Saikia</i>	Commander of 100 <i>paiks</i> .	”
3.	<i>Hazarika</i>	Commander of 1000 <i>paiks</i> .	Military service and administrative works
4.	<i>Omra</i>	Commander in charge of 3000 <i>paiks</i> .	Zonal trop commanding.
5.	<i>Nawab.</i>	Equivalent to 22 <i>Omra</i> =66000 <i>Paiks</i> .	”
6.	<i>Raikat</i>	Commander-in-chief.	Defence of the state.

**Table 6.2.** Military reforms of Nara Narayan and Chilarai.

Category	Sub-categories	Commander/function(s)
Land force	Infantry, cavalry, elphantry.	<i>Senapati, Hazarika, Nawab.</i>
Navy	War boats, <i>Bacharis</i> , <i>Koshas</i> .	<i>Barua, Karzi.</i>
Spies	-----	To collect the secret news of the enemies.
Guerrilla warfare	-----	-----

With the division of the kingdom and beginning of defensive warfare, military administration had undergone further changes. In lieu of *Raikat*, *Nazir* was entrusted with military administration and protection of the kingdom. The post of *Nazir* became vital in the arena of state administration by the early 18th century and since then feudalistic cult engulfed the state at least in military service as mentioned earlier.

#### 6.4.3. Revenue Administration

Chapter V has already highlighted the process of revenue concentration, which was manned by the state officials and revenue collectors. Visvasimha did not introduce any new system in land-revenue collection. Nara Narayan merely allowed the prevailing revenue collectors to manage the system instead of introduction of any new venture.

Units of land measurement and revenue yielding tracts had their variations in the kingdom. *Chakla*, *zilla* and *pargana* were prevailing units. Revenue collectors of the southern *parganas* became so prominent that in the last quarters of the 17th century they not only postponed to deposit land-revenue to the state treasury but also concluded agreement with the Mughals to act as their (Mughal) *Zamindars*.<sup>58</sup> Three *chaklas* of southern territory (viz. Boda, Patgram and Purbabhag) were conquered by the Mughals in the early 18th century and the Koch kingdom had taken the charge of the *izara* (deed of revenue collection) from the Mughals in 1711. A.D. *Zillah* was the revenue-yielding unit in the last years of the independent Koch kingdom.

#### 6.4.5. Administration of Justice

'State formation from the stage of tribalism' did not transform the tribal traditions in its all respect. So tribal mode of justice was a general feature for the tribal people of the kingdom. Koch, Mech and Rabha tribal villages of North Bengal, Assam and Meghalaya are still carrying on the village assembly system in the field of justice<sup>59</sup>. Local customs and traditions determined the nature of punishment. The Koch kings never intervened on the tribal autonomy. The elders of the same caste, community or multi-caste elders, on the other hand, modulated non-tribal villages. Hindu religious scriptures were the basis and source of justice<sup>60</sup>.

The *Rajshabha* (a council headed by the king) was the highest court comprising *Raj Puruhit* (court priest), *Pandits* (learned men), *Dewan* and *Yubaraj* (prince) and king himself<sup>61</sup>. The king was free to act at his will. For example, Visvasimha inflicted

a sever punishment on a Brahmin for his unjustified claims.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, King Nara Narayan issued a non-bailable arrest order to the famous Vaishnava saint Sankardeva.<sup>63</sup> But the king's will was considerably restricted by the dictation of the *shastras* (law books). In case of difficulty of determination of level and measures of the crime and punishment, *Pandit* or low officers were consulted<sup>64</sup>. In the 16th century *Rajshabha* was movable from place to place as the kings were engaged in aggressive warfare. But *Rajshabha* became confined to the capital since the early 17th century.

The local courts including the estates of *Dewan*, *Raikat* at Baikunthapur, and *Chakladar/Zamindars* were the subordinate units of the judiciary. There was no uniformity in judiciary or the equality of law was not established. Nor did the Koch kings try to do it. Rather, power centrality and domination of the small ruling section was the focal point of the judiciary.

#### 6.4.6. Other Officers and Offices.

In the changing political context, the intuitions and offices of the state had no fixed structure. While new offices were introduced, olds were modified and abolished in order to cope with the situation. But few offices were common throughout the Koch rule (See **Table 6.3**). So the *Bhandar-Thakur*<sup>65</sup> was a regular post who was in charge of the state-treasury including minting and managing the store of the palace. So *Bhandar-Thakur* can be compared with a minister of the Mughal administration called *Khan-i-Saman* (*Mir Saman*)<sup>66</sup>. There were few more new offices, introduced in the Koch kingdom like--*Garmali* (low officers)<sup>67</sup>, *Doloi* (officer in charge of the temple), *Sardar*, *Ahudi* (military officer), *Dhopdhara* (officer in charge of sports), *Mukaddam*,<sup>68</sup> *Medhi*, *Chowkidar*, (frontier gourd), *Biswas*, *Kandali*, *Kotal* etc.

For the administration of the palace the state created few post of servants such as *Supkar* (cook), *Dvari* (gatekeeper), *Bhitar Palia* (general servant), *Vaidya* (physician), *Tamuli* (betel nut supplier), etc.

**Table 6.3.** : Offices and officers of the Koch kings.

King	Description(s).	Remarks.
Visvasimha	<i>Karzi, Mantri, Bhandar-Thakur, Supkar, Char, Dyuta, Majumdar, Tamuli, Raikat.</i>	The offices were filled with the tribal leaders.
Nara Narayan	All the offices introduced by Visvasimha were maintained. New offices like - <i>Dewan, Nazir,</i>	Important offices were filled with

	<i>Patra, Kandali, Garmali, Kotwal, Makaddam, Biswas, Chaonia, Deori, Chomder, Ahudi, Sardar, Karmi, Kayastha, Laskar, Karzi, Barua, etc;</i> were introduced.	the non-tribal officers.
<b>Lakshmi Narayan</b>	<i>Karzi, Barua, Raikat, Nazir, Patra, Dewan, Senapati.</i>	-----
<b>Parikshit Narayan.</b>	<i>Laskar, Karzi, Barua, Patra, Nazir.</i>	-----
<b>Bir Narayan.</b>	<i>Raikat, Dewan, Chhatra Nazir, Karzi.</i>	<i>Nazir became the Chhatra Nazir.</i>
<b>Prana Narayan</b>	<i>Bhandar-Thakur, Majumdar, Chatra Nazir, Matri, Patra, Senapati, Kharadhara, Bara Deonia, Sarkayastha, Karzi.</i>	Prana Narayan revived the political status of the kingdom.
<b>Moda Narayan</b>	He introduced the post of <i>Mustaphi, Daptaria, Medhi</i> and <i>Chakladar.</i>	-----
<b>Mahindra Narayan(168 2-93)</b>	<i>Chhatra Nazir, Mushtaphi, Dakua, Bhandar-Thakur, Medhi, Daftaria, Garmali, Dewan, Bhitara Katak Dewan, Hisabia etc.</i>	-----
<b>Upendra Narayan and other Koch kings.</b>	<i>Chatra Nazir, Dewan, Khasnish, Suba, Jamdaria, Karzi, Baher Kotal, Darbar Khash, Khash Deonia, Oakkanbis, Patwari Doloi. etc.</i>	-----
<b>Offices common throughout the period.</b>	<i>Bhandar-Thakur, Majumdar, Senapti, Dewan, Nazir, Raikat, Karzi, Choudhury, Chowkidar, Katak, Mantri, etc..</i>	-----

### 6.5. Nature of the Administration.

Administrative arrangements of the kingdom were not the wholesale importation from outside. Even not innovated locally. While certain offices/institution like *Karzi, Raikat* and *Bhandar-Thakur* were developed from the tribal village chiefs with the growth and development of the state, *Barua, Thakuria, Saikia* and *Nawab* were imported from the Ahoms. However, the impact of the Mughal administration was more dominant than the locally developed offices. *Dewan, Nazir, Sikdar*, etc. indicate the Mughal-Afghan influence <sup>69</sup>on the Koch administration. But the kingdom was developed on the basis of the ancient principle of *Rajya* <sup>701</sup> with a king having a divine connection, militia, treasury (*bhandar*), capital (*Behar* or *Nija Behar*), territory, organized bureaucracy (consisting *mantri, karzi, patra, dewan* etc.) and off course with a political relations with the neighbouring powers. The state insignias like *Hanuman*

*Danda*<sup>71</sup> (monkey scepter) and *Raja Charta* (royal umbrella) are symbolically more identical with the Hindu concept of administration. The state emblem, *jato dharmastata jaya* (where there is righteousness, there is victory)<sup>72</sup> indicates the concept of traditional kingship of India. Hindu *Shastras* (law book) were the sources of principle. As a whole domination of tribal customs, pre-Koch political traditions were synthesized in the Koch administration.

### Notes and References.

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2. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 50-52. p. 9; *Kamrupar Buranji*, p10; *Kharga Narayanar Vamsavali*, Ms. f. 7.
3. See **Chapter 3**
4. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 123-131, pp. 23-26.
5. *Ibid.*, vs. 160-172, pp. 33-35.
6. *Raja Vamsavali*, Ms. (N.B.S.L. ms. no. 4), f. 6; A Claude Campbell: *Glimpses of Bengal - vol. 1*, (Calcutta, 1907), p. 285.
7. *Deodhai Assam Buranij*, p.127; *Kamrupar Buranji*, p10; *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 55-70, pp. 10-12.
8. *Rajopakhyan*, p.8.
9. *Ibid.*, p.12.

10. K.S. Singh.: *The Chhoto Nagpur Raj : Mythology, Structure and Ramification*, in Surajit Sinha (ed.) : *Tribal Politics and State Systems in Pre-colonial Eastern and Northeastern India* ,pp. 51-69.
11. It was claimed that Nara Narayan could cut off a goat made of iron, by a wooden sword. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 342-356, pp.69-72.
12. *Rajopakhyan*, p.24; *Legendary Account of Cooch Behar*, Ms., N.B.S.L.ms. no 109, ff.29-31.
13. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 131-143, pp.25-30.
14. *The Kamakshya Temple Inscription*. See Appendix B.
15. The Brahmins were given place in the state since the days of Visvasimha. For details see *supra Chapter VII*.
16. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* v. 149, p. 31; *Rajopakhyan*, p. 16.
17. W.W. Hunter: *Statistical Account of Bengal*, reprint ed., (New Delhi, Concept Publishing House, 1984), vol. - x., p.16.
18. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement*. (Cooch Behar, The Cooch Behar State Press, 1903), p. 236; also *Rajopakhyan*., p29.
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21. S.K.Bhuiyan(ed): *Padsha Buranji or Annals of the Delhi Badshahate*, (Gauhati, DHAS, 1947), p.244.
22. *Ibid*.
23. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri : *op .cit.*, p. 235.
24. *Rajopakhyan*, p. 28.
25. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op. cit.* p.236.
26. *Mercer and Chouvet Report*, p.170.
27. *Ibid*, also *Rajopakhyan*, p.34.
28. *Mercer and Chouvet Report*, p.170.
29. *Ibid*.
30. Rev.J.Long: *Selection from Unpublished Records of Governement for the Years 1748-1776*, edited by Mahadev Prassad Saha, (Calcutta, Firma K.L. Mukhopadhaya, 1973), p.715.

31. *Guru Charita*, vs. 37-39, p.743.
32. *Rajopakhyan*, p. 20.
33. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed: *op. cit.*, p.171.
34. *Mercer and Chouvet Report*, p.170; *Rajopakhyan*, p.37.
35. *Raja Vamsabali*, Ms.f.7. **Hingulabus** has been identified with Mahakalguri, a village of Alipurduar Subdivision where the Koch and Mech tribes have their significant concentration. Still the Meches and the Koch-Rajbanshis dominate this village.
36. Pitambar Siddhantavagis: *Markandeya Purana*, Ms, (N.B.S.L. ms. no. 08).
37. *Kamrupar Baranji*, p.18; *Baharistan-i- Ghaybi*, vol.1, p. 248.
38. *Rajopakhyan*, p.48.
39. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 165-169, pp. 34-35.
40. *Ibid.*, v. 322, p.65.
41. *The Pandunath Temple Inscription*, cited in D.Nath: *History of the Koch Kingdom* (Delhi, Mittal Publications, 1989), p. 212.
42. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed: *op. cit.*, p. 106.
43. *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.14.
44. *Assam Buranji (1648-81)*, pp. 14-16.
45. *Rajopakhyan*, p.45.
46. Khan Chowdhury Ammantulla Ahmed: *Op. cit.* p.186.
47. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, v.343, p.69.
48. *Ibid.* v. 337, p.66.
49. *Raja Vamsavali*, f.9.
50. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, v. 359.
51. *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. III, p.130.
52. *Ibid.*
53. H.Blochmann: Koch Bihar, Koch Hajo and Asam in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, *JASB*, 71.1(1872), p.52.
54. The Mughals and the Ahoms frequently defeated the Koch naval fleets. Parikshit Narayan had initial success against the Mughals but finally perished. *Baharistan-I-Ghaybi*, vol. I pp.229-243.

55. P.N.Gohain Baura: *Assam Buranji*, reprint ed., (Guwahati, 1966), p.126; *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs., 163-198,pp.34-40.
56. N.N.Acharyya: *The History of Medieval Assam: From the Thirteenth Century to the Seventeenth Century*, reprint ed., (New Delhi, Omsons Publications, 1984), p.118.
57. *Rajopakhyan*, p.20.
58. *Ibid*, p.36.
59. Surajit Kumar Paul: Traibal Council of the Rangdhani Rabha: An Autonomous Sociopolitical Institution, in Sebastian Karotempel and Dipali Danda (eds): *The Tribes of North East India*. (Calcutta, Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd., 1984), pp. 377-90.
60. Harendra Narayan Chudhuri :*Op.cit.*,p269.
61. *Ibid*, p.401.
62. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 274-75, p. 54.
63. *Guru Charita*, vs. 3449-3454, pp.686-87.
64. Harendra Narayan Choudhuri :*op.cit*, p.269.
65. *Ibid*, p.266; *Mercer and Chouvet Report*, p.143.
66. *Khan-i-Saman* was the minister in charge of the household department, royal buildings, roads, gardens, purchase, stores and workshops under the Mughal administration. I.H.Qureshi: *The Administration of the Mughal Empires*, reprint ed., (New Delhi, Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1990), pp.73-74; R.C.Majumdar (Gen.ed.): *History and Culture of the Indian People, Mughal Empire*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Bombay, Bharatiya Vidhya Bhavan, 1984), p.529.
67. *Guru Charita*, v3454,p.687..
68. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, v.535, p.109.
69. For details about the Mughal administration see, Ishtiaq Hussain Querishi:*The Administration of the Mughal Empire* ,( New Delhi, Atlantic Publishing and Distributors , 1990) ; Jagdish Narayan Sarkar : *Mughal Polity* , (Delhi ,Idarah- i- Adabiyat , 1984); Jadunath Sarkar :*Military History of India*, reprint ed.,( Delhi ,Orient Longman , 1960).
70. Ronald Inden: Ritual, Authority, and Cyclic Time in Hindu Kingship, in J.F.Richards(ed): *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, pp.43-50.

71. Harendra Narayn Chaudhuri :*op.cit.*,p. 438.*Hanuman Danda (monkey scepter)* was the symbol of sovereignty since the time of Viswasimha. Each king maintained that *danda*. Although, the rebellious prince and the *Nazir* tried to plunder the *danda*, new scepters were made in each case of disturbance.
72. See *Plate 6.1*.

## Chapter VII

### Culture: Legitimacy and State Formation.

Transition of the chieftdom to a state and concentration of political power into a small section of the tribal community had raised the questions of legitimacy of wielding such power. In regards to the state power, the term legitimacy is generally used to explain and justify the existence of concentrated sociopolitical power wielded by a portion of the community.<sup>1</sup> So Legitimacy is 'such a situation in which the rulers and the ruled shared the conviction that rules of the government is right'.<sup>2</sup> The state justifies its new institutions, hierarchy and subordination by introducing new cultural ideas and maintaining the traditional believe system.<sup>3</sup>

#### 7.1. Internal Legitimacy

Maintenance of law and order of the state by a small section of the tribal community (as has been highlighted in the chapter VI) alone was not sufficient to justify the tribal rule in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley .So the Koch state generated a specific cultural order that legitimized the rule of the tribal community. Surajit Sinha argues that it was a synthesis of 'multi- ethnic local or regional culture and caste-cultures which had been universalized by the tribal states of Northeast India to generate that order .<sup>4</sup> Like other Northeast Indian tribal states, the Koches, since the beginning of their state formations had stressed on the adoption and diffusion of the non-tribal culture and modification of their primordial believe-system which brought a homogeneity in the culture of the ruled and ruler in the internal domain of the state.

Adoption of non-tribal culture by the ruling tribe was an 'adoption from below'<sup>5</sup> and its promotion by the state was a 'diffusion (*sanskritization*) from above'<sup>6</sup> which were significantly linked with the legitimization of tribal rule. And this process eventually resulted into the new social formation i.e., *vaishnavization* (promotion to the *Vaishnava* culture) and *Hinduization* (elevation to the status of the Hindus from non-caste identity).

##### 7.1.1. Adoption of Vaishnavism.

The cultural value with a new view of social equality propagated by the Vaishnava saints had drawn the attention of the Koch rulers for the adoption of non-tribal culture essentially for legitimizing their political formation. Because the

Vaishnava saints particularly Sanakardeva had desired to evolve a simple and easily practicable religion irrespective of caste, social status and educational attainment to make a popular and common religious form of the region.

Sankardeva was born and brought up in a *Bhuiyan* family at Alipukuri in Baradowa (present Nawgaon district of Assam) belonged to the Ahom state. His Vaishnavism was seriously suffered when Suhungmung Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.), the Ahom King, had adopted an anti-Bhuiyan policy even he killed the followers and relatives of Sankardeva.<sup>7</sup> So with his followers and relatives Sankardeva left the Ahom territory and took shelter at Patbousi village in Barpeta of Lower Assam under the protection of the Koch state. A matrimonial relation was established between the Koch ruling family and the family of Sankardeva.<sup>8</sup> This marriage proved to be positive in future for bringing a cultural homogeneity in the Koch state.

The popularity of Vaishnavism had to face antagonism from the Brahmins of the Koch kingdom as it propagated the value of equal social status to its followers which was contrary to the traditional form of the caste oriented Brahmanical Hinduism where the Brahmins had top position in the social hierarchy. So the Brahmins lodged false complaint to Nara Narayan that Sankardeva was propagating such a religion that is humiliating the customs of the traditional Hinduism<sup>9</sup>. But Chilarai (an ardent follower of the Vaishnavism and the Koch general) had saved the life of Sankardeva from the antagonism of the state. Sankardeva, however, won over the Brahmins of the court of King Nara Narayan and the king became so admirer of Sanakardeva that he granted him the *mahal* of Barpeta.<sup>10</sup> Chilarai, together with his wives became his disciple<sup>11</sup>. State support to the new cultural ideas made the task easier for its rapid expansion within Koch state.

### 7.1.2. Adoption of Hinduism

Besides the Vaishnavism, the Koch kings also paid their adequate attention to the adoption of culture of the Brahmanical Hinduism. It was a common phenomenon of the tribal states of Northeast India that the Brahmins had popularized the ruling tribe as the *kshatriya* to legitimize the tribal rule<sup>12</sup> (as described in the table 7.1). Visvasimha initiated the adoption of caste-culture of the Hinduism and brought the Brahmins from different places of Eastern India and placed them in the state with land and honour<sup>20</sup>. The Brahmins on the other hand, conferred him an extra ordinary origin of his

kingship. Unlike the pre-Koch rulers of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley, genealogical link of the Koches had been connected with the popular male deity of the region like -- Shiva. The *Yogini Tantra*, a 16<sup>th</sup> century Sanskrit work on the *tantricism*, has vividly illustrated the birth of Visvasimha from the union between Shiva and Hira, a Koch wife of Haria Mech<sup>14</sup>. Subsequent genealogies, chronicles and official history, composed in the Koch state, continued the fabricated drawing of linkage between Visvasimha and Shiva. The link was constructed in such a way that the popular myths of Northern India have been utilized as the logic of interpretations of divine link.

“The sons of Sahasrarjuna, a king of Haihay dynasty of Moon race, being afraid of Parshuram, ‘the destroyer of the *kshatriyas*’; left their country and took shelter at Chikina hill of Lower Assam, particularly among the Mech people. They gradually assimilated with the tribal-culture. But one Mech chief’s (Haria Mandal) wife named Hira, had an intercourse with Lord Shiva for which a child was born who became famous as Visvasimha”.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 7.1:** Comparative table of genealogical link of the tribal states of pre-colonial Northeast India.

State	Deity	Myth(s)
Ahom	Indra	Indra, being cursed by Bashishtha, had an intercourse with a tribal woman of the Ahoms and its outcome was the birth of the founder king of the Ahoms.
Koch	Shiva	Shiva had an intercourse with a Koch woman, named Hira and the founder king of the Koch dynasty was born from their union.
Jayantia	Jayanti	One Garo chief had a marriage relation with a tribal girl who was the proxy of the goddess Jayanti. From the name of Jayanti the tribe began to be called as Jayantia.
Chutia	Kuber	The wife of the Chutia chief, Rupamati had a relation with Kuber that led to the birth of the Chutia king (Gauri Narayan)

‘This super-structured construction of divine link of the founder ruler of the Koch kingdom was a by-product of state-patronage to the Brahmins’. At the same time the Koch kings adopted the caste-culture in their coronation and adopted the *kshatriya* name<sup>16</sup>. So the Brahmins<sup>17</sup> theoretically elevated Visvasimha to the status of a Hindu ruler, i.e. *kshatriya*.

In spite of their reverence and patronage to Sankardeva and his *Vaishnavism* Nara Narayan and Chilarai had showed their interest to the Brahmins and their culture. They

invited the Brahmins from the contemporary centers of Sanskrit learning like-Mithila and Gauda. Subsequent Koch rulers- Raghudeva Narayan, Lakshmi Narayan, Bir Narayan and Prana Narayan had continued the policy of adoption of caste-culture through patronizing the Brahmins. It reached to the climax in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century when Satananda Goswami, a Brahmin from Murshidabad, was selected as *Raj Guru* (spiritual guide of the King).<sup>18</sup>

So the imports of the Brahmins became a common phenomenon throughout the Koch rule. It raises two questions, (i) why the Brahmins were invited? And (ii) why did the Brahmins attend the courts of the tribal state emerged from tribalism? First is the question of legitimacy of tribal rule that could be achieved only by the creation of a tradition of extra-ordinary (*kshatriya*) origins of the king. So the Brahmins were invited by the Koch rulers to elevate their social status from tribe to the *kshatriya* because the 'Brahmins had the sole right to determine the caste status of any community who practice the Hinduism'. Secondly lucrative land-grants, remuneration, services and prestige offered by the Koch kings had allured the Brahmins to settle in the tribal land. The Brahmins at the same time were encouraged to 'diffuse the caste-culture from above'.

## **7.2.Diffusion from Above and Distribution of Concentrated Surplus.**

Customs and rituals of the non-tribal society adopted by the ruling section of the tribe had been diffused by two major ways which enhanced the social control of the state over the subject. Redistribution of accumulated surplus through the building of universally beneficial institutions including temples of popular deities with *sanskritized* form was the first step. Second step was the diffusion of secrets of the sacred scriptures (*shastras* and *puranas*) through the vernaculars to accelerate the process of social change i.e., transition of the tribe to caste.

### **7.2.1.Construction of Roads and Tanks.**

Building of universal institutions for material benefits at the cost of the surplus concentrated by the state was a major step in the process of state formation.<sup>19</sup>Construction of roads and tanks were two major area of surplus redistribution for material benefits of the subject. A road extended from the Western Duars to Narayanpur called *Gohain Kamal Ali* had been constructed by Nara Narayan as mention in the chapter IV.This road and other roads constructed by the Khena

rulers<sup>20</sup> had been maintained by the Koch kings throughout their rule which facilitated the easy movement of the militia during the warfare and essay commercial transports. 'Chilarai Dighi' (Tufanganj), 'Banesvar temple tank' and others tanks constructed by the state<sup>21</sup> had public utility particularly in the socioeconomic life of the people of the region.

### 7.2.2. Diffusion of Neo-Vaishnavism

The neo-Vaishnavism was based on the principles of *bhakti* (devotion) contained in the *Bhagavata Purana*. According to Sankardeva, the divine service to god can be best performed by *sravana* (listening the name of the god), *kirtana* (chanting the name of god), *smarana* (recollection the name of the god), etc.<sup>22</sup> The simplistic principles of the neo-Vaishnavism and its democratic and humanistic outlook had a universal approach to the heterogeneous people of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. So all communities including the Koch, Kalita, Kayastha, Chandal, Garo, Ahom, Bhutia, Miri, Muslim and even the Brahmins had embraced Sankardeva's Vaishnavism.<sup>23</sup> Madhava Deva and Damodar Deva, disciples of Sanakardeva, reached to the heart of the heterogeneous communities of the region through their religious teachings and made the neo-Vaishnavism a popular cult of the region.<sup>24</sup>

**Table 7.2.** State sponsored important *satras* of the Koch kingdom.

Patron (King)	Satras
Nara Narayan/ Chilarai	1. Madhupur Satra (Madhupur). Founder: Sankardeva. 2. Ramrai Kuthi or Satrasal (Dhubri). Founder: Ram Ray. 3. Kakatkuta and Vela Satras (Cooch Behar, now extinct). Founders: Sankardeva and Madhav Deva. 4. Fulbari Satra (Tufanganj, Cooch Behar), Founder: Madhava Deva. 5. Bhitrua Satra (Baikunthapur). 6. Barpeta Satra (Barpeta). 7. Raghunath Pravu Satra (Dhubri), etc.
Lakshmi Narayan	8. Baikunthapur Satra (Baikunthapur). Founder: Damodardeva. 9. Nakarkhana (Buxirhat) 10. Jhingaparni (Cooch Behar).
Raghudeva Narayan	11. Shyamrai Satra (Golokganj, Dhubri).

Neo-Vaishnavism had and still has two organized institutions like *satra* (monetary) and *namaghara* (chanting house or prayer hall), which established a social domination of the Vaishnavism over its followers<sup>25</sup>. Table 7.2 shows that Nara Narayan and Chilarai had encouraged the foundation of several *satras* in present Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts of West Bengal and Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpata and other

districts of Lower Assam. Lakshmi Narayan, Raghudeva Narayan, Parikshit Narayan and Bir Narayan had continued the state support to the building of the *satras* in the state. Prana Narayan (1632-1665 A.D.) was also a great patron of the *satras* particularly of Madhupur Satra. The *charita puthis* have mentioned the existence of large number of *satras* in the Koch state (although most of them are now extinct as mentioned in the *Appendix E*), which brought the bulk of the people into the direct control of the Vaishnavism. The Koches, those who embraced the neo-Vaishnavism (*smaran*), came to be designated as *Smarania Koch*. The *namghar* as the center of regular meeting in villages and *satras* as a center of huge gathering had developed a kind of social cohesiveness among the Vaishnavas with a common identity and ideology. So the building of the institutions of the neo-Vaishnavism at the cost of the state had indirectly enhanced the state control over the 'vaishnavite subjects' through the *Vaishnavism*. But at the same time the neo-Vaishnavism had its influence on the state. Even the Koch rulers assumed their title on the Vaishnava style such as *Narayan* and their coins came to be known as *Narayani Tanka*.

### 7.2.3. Diffusion of Hinduism

The state had a large expenditure on the construction and maintenance of temples. Few historical sources claim that the ruined Kamakshya temple of Nillachal Hill was discovered by Visvasimha.<sup>26</sup> But the temple was constructed by Nara Narayan and Chilarai.<sup>27</sup> They appointed the Brahmins as priest of the temple with *brahmattar* land (land donated to the Brahmins) and granted huge amount of *devottar* land (land donated to the temple) and arranged the expenses of its daily worship<sup>28</sup>. Nara Narayan and Chilarai had great reverence to the Shaivism too. The temples of Chhoto Mahadeva at Nakkati Gachh (Tufanganj), Bara Mahadeva at Baro Kodali (Tufanganj), Banesvar Shiva temple in Cooch Behar were built by them and arranged their regular expenditure.<sup>29</sup>

Raghudeva Narayan (1587-1604) had rebuilt the famous Hayagriva Madhav temple at Manikut and endowed with *devottar* and *brahmattar* land.<sup>30</sup> Lakshmi Narayan although paid heavy tribute to the Mughals but his patronage to the temple building remained unaltered. He even started the construction of the temple of Lularkesvar at Benaras, which was completed by his successors.<sup>31</sup>

King Prana Narayan (1632-1665 A.D.) also paid adequate attention to the building of new temples at the state's expenditure. Accordingly, he constructed the present temple of Kamatesvari at Gosanimary<sup>32</sup> and Jalpesvar Shiva temple at Jalpes and granted *devottar* land for its maintenance.<sup>33</sup> King Rup Narayan (1693-1714A.D.) and Dhairendra Narayan also continued the policy of patronage to the building of temples of popular deities

**Table 7.3.:** Notable temples built by the Koch kings.

Patron(s)	Temple	Deity	Priest	Grant(s)
Nara Narayan/ Chilarai.	Kamakshya (Guwahati)	Kamakshya	Brahmin	140 <i>paiks</i> , villages, Rs.25000 and huge <i>devottar</i> land.
..	Bhairav Nath (Goalpara)	Shiva	..	-----
Nara Narayan	Banesvar (Banesvar, Cooch Behar)	..	..	Endowed with daily worship and <i>devottar</i> land.
Chilarai	Bara Mahadeva and Chhato Mahadeva (Tufanganj)	..	..	Endowed with daily worship and <i>devottar</i> land.
Raghudeva	Hayagriva Madhava (Hazo)	Vishnu	..	<i>Brahmattar</i> and <i>devottar</i> land.
..	Pandu Nath	---	---	-----
Lakshmi Narayan	Lolark Kunda (Benaras)	Shiva	Brahmin	-----
Bir Narayan	Chaturbhuj (Cooch Behar)	Chaturbhuj	..	Daily worship maintain by the state
Prana Narayan	Jalpesh (Maynaguri)	Shiva	..	Daily worship and land endowment.
..	Kamatesvari (Gossanimari)	Gossani	..	..
..	Shiddeshvai	..	..	..
..	Harihar	Shiva	..	-----
Moda Narayan	Jalpesh	..	..	The king granted 23 <i>jotes</i> of land as <i>brahmattar</i> .
Rup Narayan	Madan Mahon (Cooch Behar)	Vishnu	..	Daily worship

The worship of traditional Vishnu got its foothold in the kingdom since the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century A.D.. Since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, building of the temples of Madan Mahon (Vishnu) in the capital and different *parganas* of the state had been given

priority by the state<sup>34</sup>. So the worship of the traditional Vishnu gradually became a strong feeling in Cooch Behar particularly with the introduction of *Rash Mela* (a fair in connection with Lord Sri Krishna's divine love with beloved Radha and other *Gopinies*).<sup>35</sup>

Grants of lands to the temples, priest and other servants of the temples became a common phenomenon of the Koch kingdom. Lucrative grants had allured the Brahmin priest from outside to settle in the region. At the same time 'the *Kamrupi Brahmins*' were also employed in the services of the Hindu deities and temples. Land endowment was so high that it became a 19% of the total land revenue production of 1872.<sup>36</sup> However, percentage of *brahmattar* land was much higher than that of *devottar*. The statistics of later period (prepared by the British officials) of Cooch Behar<sup>37</sup> district shows that out of 66194 *bighas* of total rent -free land, 40022 *bighas* were *brahmattar* land (60.46%). It was largest in capital Cooch Behar and its vicinity. The *devottar* land, however, was only 4823 *bighas* that was only 7.28% of the total charitable land. Although the figure of *devottar* land, granted to the Kamakshya temple, Hayagriva Madhava temple and Jalpesh temple (roughly 23685 *bighas*, 54300 *bighas* and 44 *jotes* respectively) but *devottar* land was much less in the capital and its vicinity where *brahmattar* land was much higher (15.63% of the total charitable land) due to the large settlement of the *Panchagram Brahmins* (Brahmins endowed with five villages).<sup>38</sup>

**Table 7.4.:** Comparative table of charitable land in *bighas* (1870).

Pargana	Devottar	Brahmattar	Pet Bhata	Pirpal	Lakheraj	Total
Mekhliganj	154	4220	10321	--	721	15416
Mathabhanga	1458	2248	3293	--	262	7261
Lal Bazar	30	14741	30	--	246	15047
Dinhata	842	6241	193	---	531	7807
Cooch Behar	2247	10347	2289	84	879	15846
Tufanganj	92	2247	2500	--	--	4817
<b>Total</b>	4823	40022	18628	84	2639	66194

The state followed the policy of non-interference over the *brahmattar* and *devottar* land. The priests of Kamakshya and Kamatesvari were successful to impose

restrictions to the state by creating myths which disqualified the ruling family to visit these temples. The myths and anecdotes retained in the chronicles, genealogies and oral traditions describe that

Kendu Kalai, the Brahman priest, used to perform the daily worship of Kamakhya. Kamakhya being satisfied to the musical services and submission of the priest, used to dance being naked. The king aspired to watch it. But the deity became so angry that she cursed that if Nara Narayan and his family visit this temple, the dynasty of the Koch kings and the Brahmin priest would be destroyed<sup>39</sup>.

Nara Narayan, Chilarai and their successors like--the Koch kings of Darrang, Koch kings of Beltala and Cooch Behar royal family had strictly followed these restrictions. Similar myth has also been attached to the Kamatesvari temple of Gosan̄imari built by Prana Narayan:

“The king heard that Ratikanta Jha, a *Maithili Brahmin*, due to his extra ordinary musical performances could directly talk to the Kamatesvari. Accordingly, the king requested to the priest to meet him with the goddess. But Kamatesvari appeared in the dream and alarmed that if the priest and the king do so than their dynasty would be destroyed”.<sup>40</sup>

Since then, King Prana Narayan and the subsequent Koch kings followed this restriction.

While the post of the priest became hereditary in both the cases, the rulers lost their right to visit the temples. ‘It was a kind of establishment of brahmanical hegemony over the state-sponsored religious institutions.’ It became more prominent when restrictions were also imposed on the women, *Shudras* and even on the Brahmin-widows to see the image of Kamakhya<sup>41</sup>. It was a kind of Brahmin control over the *Shakti* temples built by the state.

But visiting the temples of Shiva, which were numerous in the state, have never been restricted for the kings and the laymen. Shaivism had its deep-root in the land prior to the rise of the Koch kingdom. Prominent and popular tribal deity called **Bathou** is identical with the Shiva of the Hindu pantheon. Moreover, fictitious genealogy of Visvasimha is connected with Shiva. So accessibility of Shiva as a deity of worship was beyond doubt. Although the Koch coins have been circulated as

*Narayani Tanka* due to the influence of the *Vaishnavism* but these are bearing the legend -*Shiva charana kamala madhu karasya* (by the honey bee of the lotus feet of Lord Shiva) in obverse with very rare exceptions. Coins of Raghudeva Narayan bears the testimony of his homage to *Hara -Gauri* or *Shiva-Durga* in the legend- *Sri Sri Hara Gauri charana kamala madhu karasya*<sup>42</sup> (by the honey bee of the lotus feet of Sri Sri Hara-Gauri). Coins of Bir Narayan were only exception where the king stressed on the *Krishna charana kamala madhu karasya*.<sup>43</sup> 'So Shiva' was the chief deity closest to the Koch kingdom.' Construction and maintenance of the Shiva temple in the state (as mentioned in the Table 7.3) had contributed to the rapid development of the Shaivism. At the same time appointment of the Brahmin priest in the Shiva temples began the process of *sanskritization* of the tribal Shaivism (*Bothouism*). Moreover, appointment of tribals as *Deori* (servant to the temple), in the temples built by the state<sup>44</sup> had reinforced the process of *sanskritization*.

#### **7.2.4. Adoption and Diffusion of Non-tribal Language and Literatures.**

Most fruitful means of *sanskritization* of the tribals and upgradation of their social status was the abandonment of tribal culture and adoption of non-tribal cultural marker like-language.<sup>45</sup> The adoption of non-tribal languages by the state for easy communication with other tribal and non-tribal states had influenced the indigenous languages and led to their linguistic *sanskritization*. The Koch kings adopted the contemporary standard vernacular (language) of Eastern India i.e. Bengali, which gradually became the language of the state. It was, however, not confined to the administrative level only. The state-sponsored intellectual communities like-the Brahmins and the *Kayasthas* were also encouraged to diffuse the teachings and knowledge of the classical literature through the vernaculars.

##### **7.2.4.1. Linguistic Sanskritization.**

Adoption of exogenous culture i.e., Hinduism, significantly linked with the Sanskrit language and literatures; led the Koch kings to create the environment of cultivation of Sanskrit language and literatures. Nara Narayan and Chilarai were well versed in the Sanskrit, as they were educated at Benaras, the famous center for traditional Sanskrit learning.<sup>46</sup> Their teacher Brahmananda Sannyashi had trained them in the *Vedas*, grammar, *puranas*, and *smritis*. The *Raja Vamsavali* composed by Ripunjay Das in the mid-19th century claims that Nara Narayan had compiled a

dictionary of Sanskrit language entitled *Malladevi Avidhan*<sup>47</sup> although no manuscript copy yet been noticed. However, acquaintance with the Sanskrit language and literature became a prerequisite for the servants of the court of the Koches in the mid 16th century A.D.<sup>48</sup>

Purushottam Vidyavagis, at the instance of king Nara Narayan and his queen, had composed a Sanskrit grammar called '*Prayoga Ratnamala*'<sup>49</sup>. In the introduction of this work he (Purushottam) says-

*Sri Malladevashya gunaikasindharamani Mahendrashya jatha nidesham.*

*jatnasa Prayoga Rantanamala bitanyate Sripurushattamena.*

(Translation: As directed by the king Malladeva (Nara Narayan), who is the combination of different qualities; Sri Purushottam has composed the *Prayoga Ratnamala*, very carefully). This grammar had been in extensive use in the Tista-Brahmautra valley even after the annexation of the Eastern Koch kingdom by the Ahoms. It was the primary grammar for general education including the kids of the royal family.<sup>50</sup> Beside the language and grammar compilation and translation of the *smritis* (law books) in the court of Nara Narayan particularly by Pitambar Siddhyantavagis had considerable influence over the newly *hinduized* people.

Bir Narayan, inspite of his less contribution to the political affairs of the state, largely contributed to the development of education in the kingdom. He established many schools for education of the royal family, sons of the Brahmins and sons of the royal servants<sup>51</sup> (both tribals and non-tribals). The Sanskrit literatures and grammar also got patronage from Prana Narayan. Jay Krishna Bhattacharyya had written treatises on the *Prayoga Ratnamala* grammar of Purushottam Vidhyavagis<sup>52</sup>.

The Sanskrit as the literary language was impracticable as *lingua franca* and standard official medium. So the Koches, instead of tribal language(s) like- Mech /Bado, Koch /Rabha to whom the emergence of the Koch state is associated; had adopted the contemporary standard of Eastern India i.e. Bengali. The earliest specimen of the Bengali prose literatures so far known is the letter of Nara Naryan dated 1477 *Saka* (1555 AD) sent to the Ahom king with an embassy.<sup>53</sup> The standard was continued by the subsequent Koch kings and got modified form during the reign of Prana Narayan. His diplomatic exchanges with the Ahom king shows the character of prose Bengali of the 17th century used in the Cooch Behar court as the official

language<sup>54</sup>. Bengali became the common language for diplomatic and official exchanges in Cooch Behar and even in Bhutan.<sup>55</sup> The Adoption of standard non-tribal vernacular by the Koches in its offices, courts and foreign affairs, led the tribal people to be acquainted with the Bengali language, which had its influence in the colloquial language. So *linguistic-sanskritization* had been accelerated by the state's patronage to the non-tribal (standard) language.

#### 7.2.4.2. Literature:

Linguistic *sanskritization* was not confined to the adoption of the standard language only. The state showed its active interest to spread the teachings and values of the non-tribal culture (adopted by the state) through the contemporary standard vernacular of the region i.e., *Bengali* and *Kamrupi*. Accordingly the *puranas*, epics and other classical literatures had been translated into the vernaculars at the court of the Koch rulers to popularize the non-tribal culture among the non-ruling section of the tribals.

#### Translation of the *Puranas*

Numerous *puranas* have been translated into the vernaculars under the patronage of the Koch kings to popularize the teachings of these texts among the masses. The translator of the *Markandeya Purana*, Pitambar Siddhantavagis says that he translated this *purana* at the instance of Prince (*Yubraj*), Samarsingha (Chialarai) to diffuse the secrets of the sacred scripture<sup>56</sup>. He also translated the *Dasham Skandha* (10<sup>th</sup> canto) of the *Bhagvata Purana*<sup>57</sup> while his contemporary scholar Kalap Chandra Dvija had translated the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> *Skandha* (canto) of the same *Purana*.<sup>57</sup> Another scholar of Nara Narayan's court was Sharbabhauma Bhattacharayya who translated the *Bhabishya Purana*.<sup>59</sup> Subsequent Koch kings also continued their patronage to the translation of the *puranas*. Gabinda Mishra, under the Patronage of Lakshmi Narayan, had translated the *Bhagavat Geeta* that was the only complete translation the *Geeta* in the region during that period.<sup>60</sup> *Naradiya Purana* another popular text in the Sanskrit, had been translated by Dwija Narayan at the instance of Upendra Narayan (1714-1763 A.D).<sup>61</sup> Largest numbers of *puranas* were translated in the Cooch Behar court during the reign of Harendra Narayan (1783-1839 A.D.), which is beyond the scope of present study. The translation of the *puranas* in the vernaculars led to the opening of the treasury of

secrets of the *puranas* among the newly *hinduized* people who were not acquainted with the Hindu scriptures. It was one of the steps of *sanskritization* from above.

**Table 7.5:** Translation of the *Puranas*.

Scholar	Patron	Work(s)	Description.
Pitambar Siddyantavagis	Visvasimha, Nara Narayan and Chilarai.	<i>Markandeya Purana</i>	It was free version of the Skt. <i>Markandeya Purana</i> in the vernacular.
”	”	<i>Bhagavat Purana</i> (10 <sup>th</sup> canto)	Translation.
Sarbabhauma Bhattacharyya	Nara Narayan.	<i>Bhabishya Purana</i>	”
Kalap Chandra Dvija	”	<i>Bhagavat Purana</i> (4 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> cantos)	”
Gobindra Misra	Lakshmi Narayan.	<i>Bhagavat Geeta</i>	It was a complete translation of the <i>Geeta</i> .
Dvija Narayan	Upendra Narayan.	<i>Naradiya Purana</i>	Translation.

**Table 7.6:** Translations of the *Mahabharata*.

Scholar(s)	Patron(s)	Work(s)	Description
Pitambar	Visvsimha, Nara Narayan and Chilarai	<i>Nal Damayanti Kahini</i> .	Translation from the Skt.
Ananta Kandali	Nara Narayan	<i>Savitri Upakhyan</i>	”
Ram Sarasvati	”	<i>Mahabharata</i>	Complete translation
Kavindra Paramesvar	”	<i>Kirata and Virata Parva</i>	Translation
Kamsari	”	”	”
Vipra Visarad	Lakshmi Narayan	<i>Virata and Vana Parva</i>	”
Kavi Shekhar	Bir Narayan and Prana Narayan	<i>Kirata Parva</i> .	”
Srinath Brahmin	Prana Narayan	<i>Adi Parva and Drona Parva</i>	”
Dvija Kaviraj	Moda Narayan	<i>Drona Parva</i>	”
Dvija Ram	Mahindra Narayan.	<i>Visma Parva</i>	”

**Table 7.7.:** Cultivation of the *Ramayana*.

Scholar	Patron	Work(s)	Description.
Sankardeva	Nara Narayan	<i>Uttarakhanda</i>	Translation.
Ananta Kandali	”	<i>Sri Rama Kirtan</i>	A narrative of the <i>Ramayana</i> in the <i>kirtana</i> style.
Kalap Chandra Dvija	”	<i>Ramayana Chandiaka</i>	”

## Epics

Translations of the Indian epics, particularly the *Mahabharata* became a fashion for the Koch kings since the beginning of their political formation. Pitambar Shiddhantavagis had taken the task of translation of the *Nala-Damayanti* episode of the *Mahabharata* at the suggestion of Prince Samarsimha (Chilarai).<sup>62</sup> In the initial stage of translation of the epics, 'episodes' of particular canto or a full canto got the priority among the court poets. Ananta Kandali had composed the *Savitri Upakhyam*<sup>63</sup> and the *Rajasuya* section of the *Mahabharata*.<sup>64</sup> The painstaking labour of poet Ram Swarasvati had produced several cantos of the *Mahabharata* like *Vana Parva*, *Visma Parva*, *Virata Parva*, *Karna Parva*, *Udyog Parva*, *Ashvamedha Parva*, etc. Poet Kabindra Paramesvar and Poet Kamsari (of the court of Nara Narayan) had also translated several cantos of the *Mahabharata*.

Lakshmi Narayan continued the state support to the translation of *Mahabharata*. Poet Vipra Prasad had translated the *Virata Parva*, *Bana Parva* and *Karna Parva* in the vernacular. Similarly Kavishekhar had translated the *Kirata Parva* at the instance of Bir Narayan.<sup>65</sup> Translation of epic got a special attention during the reign of Prana Narayan (1632-1665 A.D.) due to the political and economic prominence of the kingdom. Court poet Srinath Brahmin says that he has translated the *Adi Parva* of the *Mahabharata* at the instance of Prana Narayan.<sup>66</sup> He also translated the *Draupadi Swayamvar* episode of the *Mahabharata*.<sup>67</sup> In the introduction of this work he says that he had translated the *Draupadi Sayamvar*, originally written by Vesdeva in the Sanskrit language, to spread the teaching of this text in the vernacular which is not known to the people of the region.<sup>68</sup> Translation of *Drona Parva* is another attempt of Srinath Brahmin which he could not finish and finally completed by Dvija Kaviraj<sup>69</sup> who was the court poet of King Moda Narayan (1665-1680 A.D). Dvija Ram Sarasvati at the instance of Mahindra Narayan (1682-1693) had translated the *Visma Parva*, another important episode of the *Mahabharata*<sup>70</sup>. Like the *Puranas*, *Mahabharata* became a popular subject of translation in the court of King Harendra Narayan. The translation of different cantos of the *Mahabharata* into the vernaculars at the cost of the state had contributed to the popularization of the epics among the non-ruling section including the tribals and newly *hinduized* people. Unlike the *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* was less popular as a subject of translation. Sankardeva, Ananta Kandali and Kalap Chandra

Dvija composed few verses of the *Ramayana* in the vernacular particularly in the form of the *kirtana* (see table 7.7.).

### **Vaishnava Literature.**

While the Brahmin scholars for diffusing the secrets of the classical literature have translated the *epics* and the *Puranas* into the vernaculars, neo-Vaishnavism introduced by Sankardeva also produced several literatures on the neo-Vaishnavism. It has been already stated that Sankardeva got a special place in the court of Nara Narayan as the religious reformer who initiated the process of cultural homogenization in the region. Like Sankardeva, his disciples Madhava Deva and Demodar Deva also produced several literatures in the contemporary standard vernacular of Lower Assam.

Sankardeva began his writings with the *Harish Chandra Upakhyan* and *Rukmini Upakhyan*<sup>71</sup>. His *Nimi Narashiddhi Samvad* is a doctrinal treaty based on *Book XI* of the *Bhagavata*.<sup>72</sup> His *Bhakti Pradip* and *Anadi Patan* were based on *Garuda Purana* and *Bamana Purana* respectively. Sankardeva denounced the worship of deities in preference to *Krishna bhakti* (devotion to Krishna) in his *Bhakti Pradip*<sup>73</sup>. The *Anadi Patan* deals with the with the cosmology, philosophy and theology.

*Kirtana* (the act of chanting prayer of narrative poem) became a special attention to Sankardeva. To him, it is one of the best forms of devotion (*bhakti*) to god.<sup>74</sup> His *Gunamala* is the composition of six *kirtanas* in the jingling verses while *Kirtana Ghosha*<sup>75</sup> is the collection of 24 *Kirtanas* deal with the different episode and character of the *Bhagavata*.<sup>76</sup> Most popular form of devotional literatures composed by Sankardeva was the *Baragit*. In the *Baragit* he expressed his exalted moments with music. It became so popular that Sankardeva's disciples had continued its composition.

Sankardeva and his disciples had adopted the mono-act play called *ankiyanat* as the medium of propagation of the Vaishnavism. All kinds of popular entertainment like –dance, music, song and drama had their equal presence in the *ankiyanats*. The *Chinnajatra*, *Rukmini Harana*, *Parijat Harana*, *Kaliya Daman*, *Patni Prasud*, *Rasahkrira* and *Kamgsa Vada* dramas were the composition of Sankardeva in the form of *ankiya nat*. Madha deva had composed the *Pimpora*, *Guchowa*, *Chordhara*, *Dadhi Mathan*, *Katova Khela*, *Bhusan Bhanjan*, etc<sup>77</sup>. Although language of the *ankiyanat* was the *Brajavuli* but these had mass appeal and became so popular that the modern

Assamese music ,drama and the theatre can not deny the contribution of the *ankiyanats* in their formations <sup>78</sup>.

Sankardeva's disciples got active support from Lakshmi Narayan after the death of Nara Narayan. Birupakshya Karzi, a minister of the Koch kingdom, had great support for Madhava Deva.<sup>79</sup> Madhava Deva had started his writings with the *Janma Rahashya* or a small poem on the creation and destruction of the world based on the *puranic* theory .His *Bhakti Ratnabali* was the translation of Sanskrit work of Bishnupuri Sanyashi. The narrative poem *Nama Ghosha* contains his philosophical teachings. Madhava Deva had continued the compositions of the *Baragit* (devotional songs) and *ankiyanats*. His *Nama Malika* (translation) and *Adikanda Ramayan* have been produced at Cooch Behar <sup>80</sup>.

**Table 7.8.:** Vaishnava literatures produced under the patronage of the Koch kings.

Scholar	Patron(s)	Work	Description/content
Sankardeva	Nara Narayan	<i>Harishchandra Upakhyan.</i>	Ethical story of Hrishchandra.
..	..	<i>Rumkini Upakhyan</i>	Love affairs of Lord Sri Krishna and Rumkini.
..	..	<i>Bhakti Pradip</i>	It denounces the worship of other deities in preference to Krishna.
..	..	<i>Kirtana Ghosha</i>	<i>Kirtana</i> songs
..	..	<i>Gunamala</i>	<i>Kirtana</i> in jingling verses.
..	..	<i>Bali Chhalan</i>	A parable on King Bali.
..	..	<i>Bargit</i>	Devotional ballad.
..	..	<i>Ankia nat</i>	Mono-act plays composed in the <i>Brajavuli</i> .
..	..	<i>Bhatima</i>	Panegyrics in praise of Lord Krishna.
Madhav Deva	Lakshmi Narayan	<i>Nama Ghosha.</i>	Treaties on philosophy of the Viashnavism.
..	..	<i>Bhakti Rantanvali</i>	
..	..	<i>Bhatima and Bargit</i>	Panegyrics in praise have Lord Krishna and a devotional ballad.
Ananta Kandali	Nara Narayan	<i>Vaishnava Amrita</i>	About the Vaishnavsim
..	..	<i>Geeta Govinda</i>	Translation
Damodar Deva	Lakshmi Narayan	<i>Bargit</i>	Devotional songs

The Vaishnava literatures under the patronage of the Koch state had also flourished due to the significant contribution of Ananta Kandali, a Brahmin disciple of

Sankardeva. Ananta Kandali had completed the unfinished *Dasham Skandha* (10th canto) of the *Bhagavata Purana* started by Sankardeva.<sup>81</sup> His poetical works- *Mahiravan Badha*, *Harihar-Yuddha*, *Vrittisur Badha*, *Bharat-Savitri*, *Kumar Harana Kavya* and *Khatasura Badha* were produced in the court of Nara Narayan. As a disciple, he further carried out the objectives of Sankardeva to propagate the messages of the Vaisnavism into the popular level. In the 10th canto of the *Mahabharata (Madhya Dharam)* he said 'although well versed in Sanskrit, he is translating the ultimate knowledge (from the Sanskrit) to carry out the messages into the popular level including the women, *Shudra*, non-caste and other marginalized people<sup>82</sup>. Ananta Kandali also composed the *Vaishnavamrita* (the nectar of the *Vaishnavism*) and translated the *Geeta Govinda* of Jaydeva from Sanskrit into the vernacular.<sup>83</sup> However, he recognized the patronage of the state in the translation<sup>84</sup>.

The Vaishnava literatures produced under the patronage of the Koch kings were not confined among the literates and the state-officials. It had great appeal to the masses too. The propagation of messages of the Vaishnavism through the *kirtana* (chanting), *sravana* (listening), *baragit* and *ankiyana*t significantly contributed to the diffusion of the non-tribal cultural values among the masses.

#### **Miscellaneous Literature:**

The Koch kings also patronized the scholars to compose the non-religious literatures like-- biography, history and literatures for practical uses. Bhusan Dvija, a court poet of Nara Narayan, composed the *Guru Charita* (biography of Sankardeva). Similarly, Ram Ray (father-in-law of Chilarai), had produced the biography (*Gurulila*) of his *Guru*, Damodar Deva. Construction of history, at the cost of the state, also got a special attention from Prana Narayan (1632-1665 A.D). Kaviratna had composed the *Rajakhandha* (*A history of the Koch kingdom*). But this work is not available now.<sup>85</sup> Another work, *Visvasimha Charitam* (biography of Visvasimha) had been composed by Srinath Brahmin during the reign Prana Narayan. It was a kind of history that linked the genealogy of the Koch rulers with the most popular deity of the region. The *Kan khaowa*, a cradlesong by Ram Sarasvati (a court poet of Nara Narayan) is an exceptional type of literatures. *Guptamani* of Madhav Deva deals with the theory of mind and its relations with the environment<sup>86</sup> while Sridhar's *Jhotisha* was work on astronomy.

**Table 7.9.:** Miscellaneous literatures of the court of the Koch kingdom.

Scholar(s)	Patron(s)	Work(s)	Contents/Comments
Ram Sarasvati	Nara Narayan	<i>Kankhaowa</i>	Cradle song
Bhushan Dvija	„	<i>Guru Charita</i>	Life sketch of Sankardeva.
Ram Ray	Nara Narayan and Chilarai	<i>Gurulila</i>	„
Sridhar	Nara Narayan	<i>Jhotisha</i>	Astronomy
Bakul Kayastha	„	<i>Lilavati and Bhumi Pariman</i>	Mathmatics
Madhava Deva	Lakshmi Narayan	<i>Guptamani</i>	Deals with the history of mind and its relations with the environment.
Kaviratna	Prana Narayan	<i>Rajakhanda</i>	Original ms. is not available.
Srinath Brahmin	„	<i>Visvasimha Charitam</i>	Biography of Visvasimha.

#### 7.2.4.3. Literature: and Sanskritization.

The forgoing survey on the literatures shows that the state-sponsored stalwarts had mainly translated the classical (Sanskrit) literature in the vernaculars and composed *smritis* (law books) and Sanskrit grammar for educational development, which accelerated the ‘process of *sanskritization* from above’. This had several outcomes in the sociopolitical life of people of the region.

The ‘ruling section’ of the tribe was *kshatriyized* theoretically at least in the literatures produced under its patronage. In the court literatures, the Koch kings have been propagated as the protectors of the kingdom and savoir of the Brahmins, cows, Vaishnavas and intellectual class. Hence legitimate rulers.

Social influence of the literary activity was most significant. The tribals, newly *hinduized* tribals and the non-tribal laymen got the taste of the secrets of the classical literatures because of their translation into the vernaculars. At the same time it influenced the language of the tribal people because non-tribal vernaculars became the medium of religious teachings. So the Koch language has been extinct from North Bengal at least from the *Vaishnavite* and ‘detribalized Koches’. ‘So linguistic change was a by-product of the diffusion of the non-tribal culture by a tribal state which is equally linked with the legitimization aspect of the state formation.

**Table 7.10.:** Literatures and *sanskritization*.

. Item	Description	Result(s)
<i>Puranas</i>	Translations into the vernaculars.	Popularized the secrets of the Sanskrit (classical) literatures.
Epics	Translation into the vernaculars.	Popularized the epics and developed the Bengali language in the popular level.
<i>Vaishnava</i> literatures	Translation and composition.	Cultural homogeneity and developed the Assamese language and literature.
<i>Ankiyanat</i>	Composition.	Developed the theatre, music and songs.

### 7.3.Primordial Culture: Modification, Synthesis and Continuity.

Like other tribal states of Northeast India <sup>87</sup>and secondary states of elsewhere <sup>88</sup>, the Koch state inspite of its adoption and patronage to the non-tribal cultural ideologies had conserved the primordial culture. Although the ruling section of the tribe had adopted the non-tribal cultural marker including language and the religious ideologies but the tribals beyond the ruling section, particularly of distant hilly land had maintained the primordality, where the state-sponsored religious ideologies and literatures had less influence. More over, the rulers could not avoid the tribal support in the warfare. So the *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* refers that 'the worship of the Shiva, solely with the Vedic rituals, was antagonized by the tribals and Nara Narayan allowed their traditional way of worship with animal sacrifices and offering of country beer (*chakat*) with colourful tribal music and dances.<sup>89</sup>The Kacharis, Meches, Koch and other tribes of northern side of the *Gohain Kamal Ali*, extended from Cooch Behar to Narayanpur, were allowed to maintain their own cultural form with their own priests and rituals while the tribals of the of southern side of the said rout adopted non-tribal culture <sup>90</sup>. So the maintenance and conservation of the older believe system can nullify the hypothesis of full fledged *hinduization* of entire Koch tribe in the initial stage of their state formation erroneously propogated by some scholars in the 1950's.<sup>91</sup>

Still the Koches, Meches and Rabhas are continuing their tribal style their religious lives .<sup>92</sup> The Rabhas and Koches have their traditional male deity called *Rishi* (Mahakal) and female deity known as *Jog*. The rituals of the chief deities are performing by the *Deoshi/Deodhai/Huzi* (tribal priest) who is assisted by the *Deories*. The Meches are also the follower of the *Bathouism* i.e. worship of Bathou (Shiva) who

is also known in many others names. The priest is not employed from any particular family. Any one can achieve the qualities of priesthood. There are many other tribal deities in the belief of the above-mentioned tribal communities .Two daughters of the chief male deity (Rhishi / Bathou) are common among them. The Rabhas called them Rountak and Basek while to the Meches they are called Alai Khungri and Bilai Khungri. Rountak is the synthesized form of goddess Kali and goddess Lakshmi of the Hindus. The Meches have a similar female deity called Mouthansri or Lakshmi. So it appears that the tribal culture had been exist in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley with its primordial form. But there were extreme differences between the cultures of two opposite section of the same tribe i.e., Koches in the top of the political power and Koches of the tribalism of remote periphery.

**Table 7.11:** Traditional tribal deities of the Tista -Brahmaputra valley.

Tribe	Chief male deity	Chief female deity	Other deities	Priest	Special attraction.
Koch	<i>Rhishi</i>	<i>Jog</i>		<i>Huzi</i>	
Mech	<i>Bathou/ Mouria Bourau</i>	<i>Aai Kamakshya</i>	<i>Aaileng</i> (cowherd of the Bathou), <i>Agrang</i> (general of the Bathou), <i>Alai Khungri</i> and <i>Bilai Khungri</i> (daughters of the <i>Bathou</i> ), etc.	Deodhai	<i>Kherai puja, Deodhai dance.</i>
Rabha	<i>Rhishi</i>	<i>Jog</i>	<i>Rountak</i> and <i>Basek</i> (daughter of the Rhishi) .	Deoshi	<i>Hangai Sani dance</i>

### 7.3.1.Modification and Continuity.

Synthesis and modifications of tribal culture were inevitable for the juxtaposition of primordial and *sanskritized* cultures among the tribals of the same region particularly in the middle segment of the tribe. This segment is the mixture of the *sanskritised* ruling section and the tribals of the distant land and its culture was a by-product of the 'sanskritization from above' and the morphological modifications of the tools of production. Peasantization of the tribals had accelerated the process of cultural synthesis of the Koches of our study (as explained in the chapter V).

The Koches, after their *sanskritisation* through the abandonment of certain items of traditional food habit adoption of the cultural ideology of the Hinduism; have been largely transformed into the status of the *Rajbanshi* or *Koch-Rajbanshi* in North Bengal and Assam. But they are still maintaining the tribal traditions with modified forms in their religious practices and beliefs which are basically related to their livelihood. Their

practices of religious festivals and beliefs related to the agriculture and other means of livelihood have been analyzed in the next section of the chapters.

### ***Roagara puja or Gocharbona.***

Celebration of first transplantation of paddy called *roagara* or *gocharbona* was and still is a common practice among the Rajbanshis of North Bengal and Lower Assam<sup>93</sup>. With the beginning of rainy season in May-June or June-July, the cultivators observe this practice to satisfy the mother earth. It is a practiced without priest. Any family or villages perform it. It is not different from the *Hangai-Sani* (musical dance) of the Rabha tribe of Sub-Himalayan Bengal. *Hangai Sani* is practiced in time of showing paddy by the tribe.

### ***Lakhi Dak.***

*Lakhi Dak* or call to Lakshmi (the deity of wealth) is practiced by the Koch-Rajbanshis when the paddy field is about to the stage of flowering and ear are out. The owner of the land or cultivators held the *puja* of the paddy field (*dhan bari*) in the last day of the Bengali month *Aswin*. He offers a handful of mustard cake (*khail*) to the paddy field and set light in a jute stick. The cultivators call the *Lakshmi* to grow more paddies for him as he offering the inorganic manure (mustard cake) for the field. So the *Lakhi dak* was the symbol of more production of paddy, which was the major crop in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley.

### ***Dhankata Puja***

When the paddy is ripe, the peasant family performs a ceremony before cutting paddy. Senior most woman of the family performs the ceremony by cutting a handful of the ripe paddy ears.<sup>94</sup>

### ***Hudum Deo.***

When there is drought and no rainfall during the rainy season, the Rajbanshi women observe a special *puja*. They chose a distant paddy field to satisfy the deity of the rain called *Hudum Deo*. One plantain tree symbolizes the *Hudum Deo*. No man is allowed to see this *puja*. They believe that their prayer and abuses would satisfy the rain god and rain will fall. The concern for the better cultivation of paddy led the women to propitiate *Hudum Deo*.

**Table 7.12:** Principal festivals of the Koch-Rajbanshis.

<b>Festival</b>	<b>Season</b>	<b>Perticipants</b>	<b>Related to</b>
<i>Baishakhi</i> and <i>Ashadi Seva</i>	From the month of <i>Baishakha</i> to <i>Ashada</i> of B.S.(May-July)	Men	Agriculture
<i>Gram Thakur</i>	<i>Jaishtha</i> and <i>Ashada</i> (June-July)	„	„
<i>Gachibona</i>	„	„	„
<i>Tistabudi/ Mechini</i>	<i>Baishakha</i>	Women	Agriculture and river.
<i>Lakhi Dak</i>	<i>Aswina</i>	Men	Agriculture
<i>Bishahari</i>	<i>Naga Panchami</i>	General	Snake worship
<i>Bhandani</i>	<i>Ekadashi</i> , after the emersion of the <i>Durga</i> . (October-November)	„	Shakti worship
<i>Hudum Deo</i>	<i>Jaishtha</i> (June -July)	Women	Rainfall and agriculture
<i>Madan Kama</i>	<i>Baishakha</i> (May-June)	Men	Woship of tree and fertility
<i>Satyapida</i>	<i>Baishakha –Jaishtha</i> (May-June)	„	Cultural synthesis
<i>Paglapida</i>	<i>Falguna</i> (March)	„	„
<i>Jiga Thakur</i>	Anytime	Women	Worship of tree and fertility
<i>Naya Khai</i>	<i>Agrahayan</i> (November-December)	General	Agriculture
<i>Pushna</i>	<i>Paush-Sankranti</i> (January)	„	„
<i>Siyal Puja</i>	„	„	Animal worship
<i>Salesvari</i>	<i>Falguna-Chaitra</i> (March)	„	Worship of Forest
<i>Gorakhnath</i>	„	Men	Agriculture and livestock
Shiva and his companions	<i>Shiva Chaturdhashi</i>	General	Chife male deity
<i>Dharam Thakur</i>	<i>Baishakha</i>	„	Cultural synthesis
<i>Garima and Chadaka</i>	<i>Bishub Sankranti</i> (April)	Men	Agriculture and Magical rites
<i>Bishua</i>	„	„	Agriculture
<i>Kali Thakur</i>	<i>Dipanvita</i> (October-November)	„	Chief female deity

### ***Mechini Khela***

River, particularly the *Tista* as one of the great river of North Bengal is worshiped by the peasantized Koch-Rajbanshis in every village. The *Tista* is considered as sacred since ancient period. The *Kalika Puran* in its *Chapters 77 and 78* has given a detailed account of the sacred rivers of Kamarupa including the *Tista*, the *Jatoda*, the *Karatoya*,

the *Subarnamanas*, etc. The *Tista* is worshiped by the Koch–Rajbanshis, Meches and other communities in the month of *Baisakha* of the Bengali calendar, which is called *Mechni khela* or *Tista Budi puja*. The image of the *Tista* is like a white old woman. The *puja* is performed by their own priest called *Adhikari* or *Deosi*. The *Hari* and *Mali* castes (Lower caste Hindus) are also entitled to perform the worship.<sup>95</sup> Pigeon, duck's egg, betel leaf, *ganja*, are generally offered to the *Tista*.

*Tista Budi* or *Mechini* has been identified as *Durga* in the *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*. It contains that while *Visvasimha* was retreating from an unsuccessful raid against the *Bhuiyan* of *Phulguri*, he was saved by the *Mechini* and had given the secrecy of that *Bhuiyan* and eventually *Visvasimha* got the success.<sup>96</sup> This myth was definitely attached to the Koch chief *Visu* in later period. But local traditions prevailing in the Western Duars have described *Mechini* as just another incarnation of *Durga*. When *Shiva* was said to have come down to the Meches, *Durga* and *Ganges* were also began to live with them as *Mech* women and hence her worship is called *Mechini puja* or *khela*.<sup>97</sup>

These myths and beliefs are not the sudden innovation. It derives from the tribal tradition of nature worship or animism. River being the sources of water, irrigation and flood, and its popularity among the tribals led them to think that river is the abode of spirit. Deification and attachment of Hindu myths and popular deities were attached gradually and eventually took the form of folk festival.

### *Salesvara Puja*

According to the tradition prevalent in the Western Duars, *Salesvara* is nothing but the god of forest. The tradition is that '*Salesvar* or forest god' saves the men from the attack of wild animals in the forest when they extract natural resources and gather fruits, roots, honey, etc. The worship is performed by a *Deoshi* who offers a pair of cock and instead of killing, set them free to the forest. A big tree is chosen as god. The worship is done before the beginning of any operation for resource extraction from the forest. The *Deoshi* also offers flower to the hero of *Mech* tribe called *Khontopal*.<sup>98</sup>

The Koch-Rajbanshis also observe few other festivals like—*Baishakhi* and *Ashadi Seva*, *Madan Kama*, *Gorakhnath*, *Bisua*, *Siyal Puja*, *Bishahari*, *Naya Khai*, *Jiga Thakur* etc., which are equally related to their livelihood. The beliefs and practices relating to the production of paddy are mostly observed in the family level in the

normal seasons. Community participation is occasional particularly in the time of emergency. However, in the occasional hunting, fishing and gathering of forest products with a collective method the Koch-Rajbanshis are still maintaining the community participation. Community fishing of the Rajbanshis and the *Nanchang reiny* (fishing dance) of the Rabhas are still bearing the testimony of the importance of the community participation in the economic life of the people of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley which is one of the features of the tribal economy.

### 7.3.2. Synthesis of Culture.

Cultural synthesis in the Koch state was the ultimate impacts of the state sponsorship to the diffusion of exogenous culture, adoption from below, continuity of the tribal believe system and spread of the Islamic faith in the region. The synthesis of religious culture was most prominent in the worship of chief male and female deities i. e., *Shiva* and *Shakti (Durga/Chandi/Gauri)* of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley.

#### ***Bhandani***

*Bhandani* or the *Vanadevi*, a localized incarnation of *Durga*, seated on a tiger, is worshiped in the western Duars and Cooch Behar<sup>99</sup>. Unlike *Durga* of the Hindu pantheon, *Bhandani* is worshipped alone, just immediate after the immersion of *Durga*.

There are several myths attached to this deity. According to one, *Bhandani* is *Durga* who fought against the demons and after destroying the demonic power left for *Kailash*, riding over a tiger and ordered the king to worship her. According to another tradition, a king of certain jungle tract being forget to worship the *Devi Durga* arranged a special worship after the proper time was over and that is why *Devi* is worships after the immersion of *Durga*. However, in Cooch Behar there is the third myth that *Bhandani* is not *Durga* but *Bhandarni* or storekeeper of *Durga* who wish to get worship from the people. Whatever the myths attached to the *Bhandani* it is true that *Bhandani* is not a deity of the Hindu pantheon. The tribal deity became mixed with the *sanskritized* form of *Durga*. It is a kind of synthesis.

#### ***Devi Puja***

*Devi* or *Durga* was and still is being worshiped in the ruling family in Cooch Behar and the Raikat family with a special form having the tribal traditions. It is a special synthesized form of both the *Durga* of the Hindu pantheon and chief female deity of the tribals. The tribal king although adopted the Vedic form of the *Durga* but

did not abandon its tribal form. In the chiefdom or Haria Mandal and Visvasimha, Durga is said to have been worshiped as *Mechini* by the Koch and Mech tribes. Visvasimha, even sacrificed *faringas* (flying insect) and a fellow tribal cowherd to the goddess *Mechini* <sup>100</sup>. However, other deities of the Hindu pantheon (like-- Lakshmi, Sarasvati, Kartik and Ganesh) were less known to them. So *Mechini* was worshipped alone. There is another myth that King Nara Narayan had seen a special form of goddess Durga in the dream who ordered him to introduce and popularize her worship in the kingdom. <sup>101</sup> Image of the deity is a special one. *Devi* stands on the lion that bites the elbow of the demon *Mahishasur*. There is another lion too <sup>102</sup>.

The worship is generally performed by a 'Kamrupi Brahmin'. However, certain tribal traditions are still attached to the *Devi*, such as the *Chalia Baria*, which is a special *puja*. In the second day of the *puja* a non-Brahmin priest performs it. Together with buffaloes, he-goats and tortoise, boar is also sacrificed in the *navami tithi* (third day). Sacrifice of tortoise and boar are not permitted to the worship of the 'Vedic form of the Durga' as they are the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. A tradition is current in Cooch Behar and Baikunthapur (Raikat family) that once there was the tradition of human sacrifice. But now, an image of human figure made of powdered rice and coloured with the human blood, is sacrificed in Devibari temple of Cooch Behar. The sacrificial objects like-- tortoise and boar and the image itself show that there was strong influence of tribal concept of the deity. Contrarily, customs and rituals of the Hindu pantheon for the ceremony had synthesized the worship of a popular deity of Eastern and Northeast India.

Shiva or Mahakal is the chief male deity of both the tribals and the non-tribals of the Tista-Brhamputra valley. So Shiva is being worshiped both by the Brahmin and tribal priests with certain tribal traditions. The state itself built several temples of Shiva (as mentioned earlier) and employed the tribal priests (*deory*) to assist the Brahmin priest of the temples. The tribal rituals of the worship of Shiva are generally performed by the *deories*. The style of Shiva worship in the temples of Bara Mahadeva at Baro Kodali, Chhoto Mahadev at Nakkatigahh, Mahakal of Mahakal Guri village and many other Shiva temples of the region are still bearing the testimonies of cultural synthesis where animals are sacrificed and fishes of local varieties are offered beside the performance of the Vedic rituals. More over certain tribal male deities like --*Masan*,

*Jachha, Bura Thakur, Dhum Baba*, etc., are being worshiped as Shiva where tribal traditions have significant presence.

#### **Others.**

Beside Shiva and Durga, specimens of religious synthesis also available in certain other folk festivals and worship of folk deities. The *Satyapida* and the *Paglapida* are the synthesized form of the Hindu and the Islamic faiths. Most popular aspect of the Koch-Rajbanshi beliefs, however, is *Garam puja* where deities of the Hindu pantheon, Islamic faith and tribal concept of spirits have their equal presence.<sup>103</sup>

The modification of the form of the tribal deities and their synthesis with the deities of the Hindu pantheon (non-tribal) is not merely the *sanskritization* of the tribal culture. The tribals did neither abandon their animism completely nor assimilated with the caste-culture even after *hinduization*. 'What had been occurred is the modification of tribal culture and synthesis of indigenous and exogenous culture patronized by the state'.

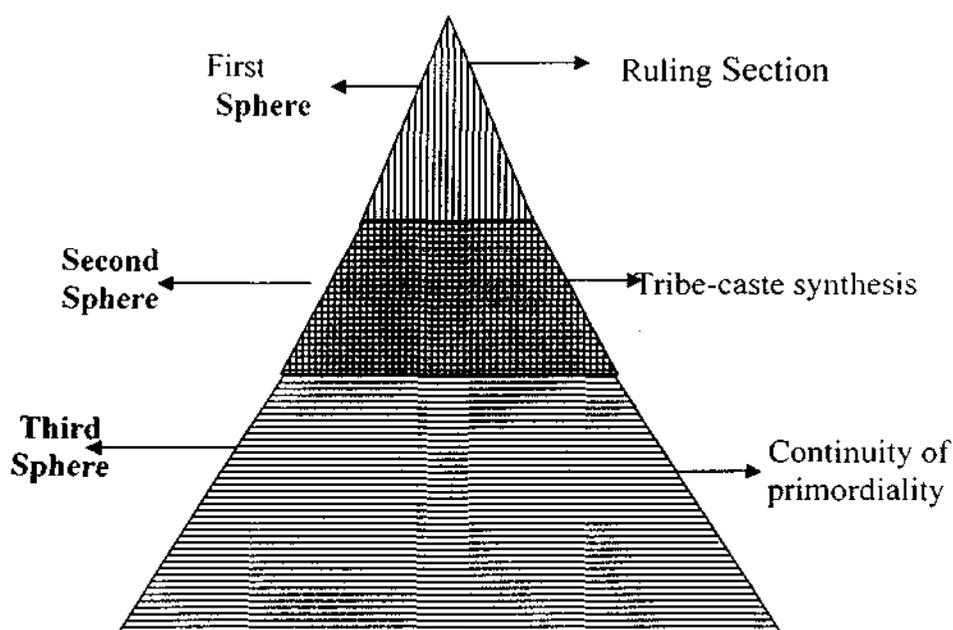
#### **7.4. Internal Legitimacy and the Spheres of Cultural Changes.**

The process of cultural change discussed in the forgoing section of the chapter reveals three spheres of influence of the '*sanskritization*' among the tribal people of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. First sphere was the ruling section comprising the ruling family, *Raikat*, *Karzis* and the *Patras*, who adopted the culture of the caste-society and the neo-Vishnavism and changed their social customs on the light of the new cultural ideologies. They patronized the Brahmins, Vaishnava saints, built the temples and *satras* and encouraged the diffusion of caste-culture among the tribals. It gave them twofold legitimacy. First is the legitimacy from the non-tribals because '*sanskritized* tribals' were recognized as *kshatriya* i.e. ruling caste. Second is the legitimacy from the tribals because the ruling section had delinked it from the tribal control.

The second sphere stood between the ruling section and the tribals of the remote periphery. It had its mobility towards *sanskritization*. The peasantized tribals and *hinduized / vaishnavite* non-ruling tribals with modified animism and synthesized cultural form constitute the second sphere. They partially abandoned the tribal social customs, food habits, language, mode of production and way of life which were replaced by the adoption from the exogenous culture.

The third sphere consisting numerous tribal people is less influenced by the culture of the caste-society. They were less peasantized and their mode of production remained traditional and of mixed character of subsistence tribal economy. They have conserved primordial faiths, beliefs and practices. Meches of the Duars and Rabhas of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri districts ('core area' of the Koch Kingdom) and extended territories have maintained the primordiality. Even they remained nomadic in their settlement and agricultural operations till the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>104</sup> The state did not forcibly impose the cultural values of the caste-society over them.

**Figure: 7.1:** Level of *Sanskritization*.



'The *sanskritization* from above' is thus, generated the centripetal forces of cultural change of the tribals which is equally related to their mode of production. Culture change had elevated the ruling section to a **caste**. It emanates the forces of further change of non-ruling tribals particularly through the patronization of non-tribal cultural agents and building of temples endowed with land, land-grants to the religious institutions and diffusion of non-tribal literatures through the vernaculars. It legitimized the emerging tribal power in the internal domain. As the entire tribal folk was not

transformed to a non-tribal entity, primordial culture with modified form had been patronized by the state to make its rule acceptable to the tribals of the remote periphery.

### **7.5.External Legitimacy (Horizontal Legitimacy).**

Internal legitimacy so far been noticed in the process of integration of ruling power, maintenance of law and order through specific institutions and agencies to enforce the coercive power, adoption of advanced culture with synchronic maintenance of older believes, however, do not legitimate it in the external field. The rule of particular tribe does not achieve sovereignty until or unless the wieldier of the authority is recognized by the neighbouring states (both tribal and non- tribal). Sovereignty of pre-colonial tribal state of Northeast India, in most cases rested on regular expeditions and warfare. However, military expeditions alone do not materialize the horizontal legitimacy. Recognition of tribal kingdom by the pre-modern non-tribal states has been noticed in the matrimonial alliances and relations.<sup>105</sup> In the present case, the Koch kings adopted and experienced both military expeditions and warfare and marriage relations with non-tribal states and social groups for the recognition of the 'tribal state' as legitimate ruling entity and for the elevation of their social status.

The warfare had served two purposes. First is the extraction of booties that enforced the state formation process which was a basic feature of the political formation of the Koches since the beginning. Regular military expedition had maintained the sovereignty of the Koch kings in the conquered territories. Instead of provincial system, conquered territories were directly administered from the core area. Thus, regular expedition was essential to keep the conquered territories in control, lack of which led to the gradual decrement of the Koch territories in the extended area. The role of warfare and the military expedition have been already discussed in the chaptersIII and IV.

Second means of external legitimacy is quite interesting for the Koch kingdom. Like contemporary and previous states of India, the Koches adopted the policy of the matrimonial relations. The *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* and other genealogies of the Koch kings have given a long list of 18 wives of Visvasimha from Nepal, Kashmir, Gauda, Kashi, Mithila, Sonitpur and Kamarupa.<sup>106</sup> These marriages of Visvasimha had attached the tribal kings with other political identities and dominant powers. The *Rajopakhyan* has given another description that Chandan (the first king of the Koches),

Vivasimha and Sisvasimha (*Raikat*) had married three daughters of Turbak, governor of Goalpara, appointed by the Sultan of Bengal.<sup>107</sup> Whether it is fictitious are not, it had little connection with this external legitimacy. Nara Narayan and Chilarai had marriage relations with the Kayastha Bhuiyans. Pratap Ray Bhuiyan's daughter and niece were married to Nara Narayan and Chilarai respectively<sup>108</sup>. Both Nara Narayan and Chilarai became great patron of the Vaishnavism for these marriages. These marriage relations with the non-tribal families had reinforced the process of *sanskritization*.

While Lakshmi Narayan had been engage in conflict with Parikshit Narayan, he allowed the Mughal intervention in the Koch Kingdom. Under his initiatives one political marriage had been performed with the Mughal party. Man Singh, the Mughal governor of Bengal was given marriage in 1596 A.D. with Pravabati Devi, sister of Lakshmi Narayan.<sup>109</sup> It was not merely recognition for the Koch kings but Lakshmi Narayan wanted to utilize the Mughal support against the Raghudeva and Parikshit Narayan. Lakshmi Narayan also tried to establish good terms with the Ahoms with the same purpose in 1620 A.D.. Even he promised the Ahom king to make a matrimonial relation with him. But after the death of Lakshmi Narayan, Bir Narayan denied to keep the promise of the late King. Instead of daughter of the late king, Birupakshya Karzi, one state official, had offered his daughter Lakshmi Priya to the Ahom king and granddaughter, Hemaprabha, to the Ahom prince.<sup>110</sup> These offers of daughters and sisters of the Koch kings to the dominant neighbouring power were essentially 'Koch attempt of achieving external security'.

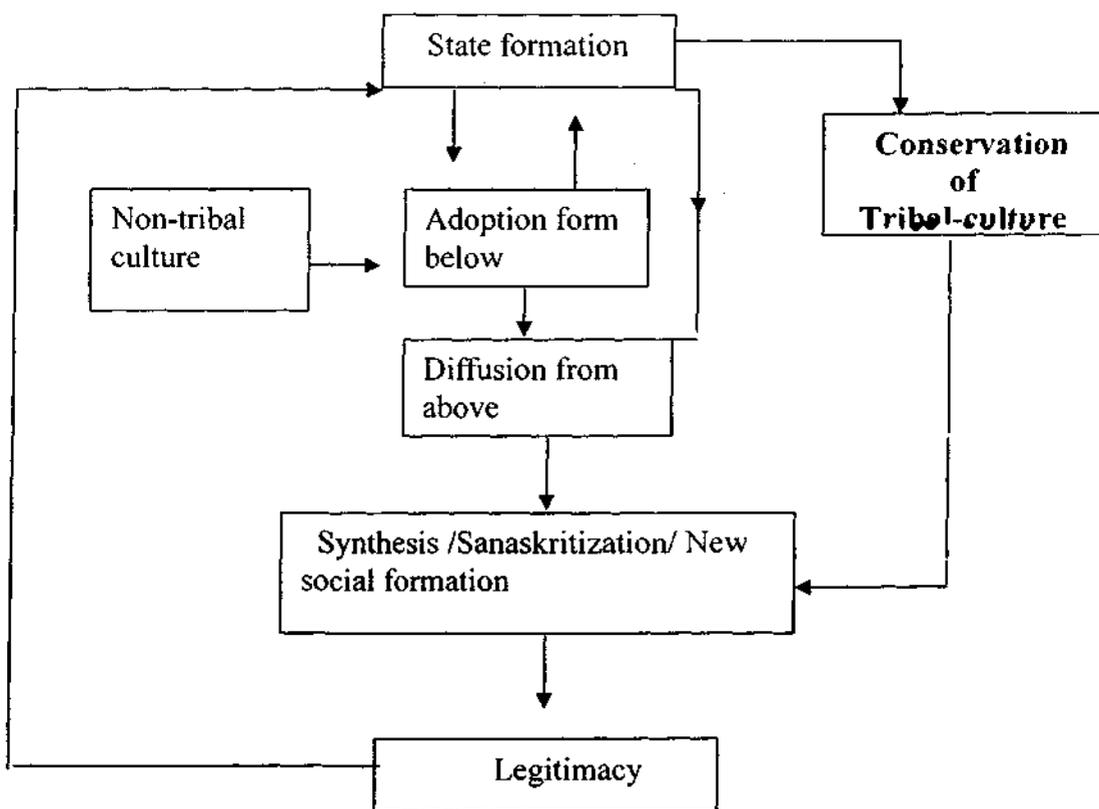
**Table 7.13:** Marriage relations of the Koch rulers in regards to the external legitimacy.

Ruler/ officer	Name of the wife /daughter/ sister	Party
Visvasimha	Ratnakanti.	Nepal.
„	Chandrakanti, Purnakanti, Hemavati and Rati.	Kamarupa
„	Hemaprava and Padmabati.	Gauda
„	Tilottama	Kashmir
„	Chandra, Chandranana, Jaya, Vijaya and Jayanti.	Kashi
„	Lalita, Labanyabati and Padmamala.	Sonitpur
„	Satarupa and Kanchanmala.	Mithila.
Nara Narayan	Bhanumati	Pratap Ray
Chilarai	Chandravati	Nice of Pratap Ray
Lakshmi	Pravabati (sister of the king)	Man Singh

Narayan		
Birupakshya Karzi.	LakshmiPriya (daughter) Hemaprava (grand daughter)	Ahom king
Prana Narayan	Rupamati (sister of the king)	Pratap Malla (king of Nepal).

But Prana Narayan once again revived the political status of the Kingdom. For him matrimonial relation was not defensive rather legitimacy of the Kingdom was the purpose. So he offered his sister Rupamati Devi, to Pratap Malla, the Malla king of Nepal.<sup>111</sup> *The Ugratara Temple Inscription* (1665) refers that the King Pratap Malla had married Rupamati Devi, the second daughter of the Koch king Bir Narayan. This marriage relation established a close relation between the two distinct ruling families.

**Figure 7.2.** Legitimacy and state formation



Achieving the external legitimacy through the marriage relation was started with Visvasimha. His relations with different states of Northern India and Northeastern

India had accelerated *distribaliration* of kings emerged from tribalism. The marriage relations with the *Kayasthas* were more social than political.

### 7.6 Observations

The Koch kingdom did adopt similar approach to legitimize its rule within the state, as did a few contemporary tribal states of Eastern and Northeastern India. Distribution of concentrated surplus through the building of religious institutions and works of public utility had its positive outcome both for the state and the subjects. Adoption and patronization of non-tribal ideologies and conservation of primordial culture by the state had legitimize the Koch rule both among the tribals and the non-tribals .At the same time it reinforced the detribalization process which eventually fitted the *Hinduized/sanskritized* tribe within the non-tribal social hierarchy. Simultaneously, adoption of contemporary standard vernacular in the offices, courts and foreign relations and translations of the religious scriptures to the vernaculars had begun the process of linguistic *sanskritization* i.e. abandonment of the self (tribal) and the adoption of the alien (non-tribal) language in the sociopolitical life. So internal legitimization led to the growth of social stratification that simultaneously related to the state formation .On the other hand marriage relations with the non-tribal communities had recognized the formation of a political stratum within the tribe, which in the caste-hierarchy is stands as *kshatriya* i.e. legitimate ruler .So legitimization aspect of the state formation eventually resulted into the new social formation which brought someshort of cultural homogeneity.

### Notes and References.

1. Morton H. Fried: *The Evolution of Political Society*, (New York, Random House, 1967), p. 26.
2. H.J.M. Cleassen: *The Internal Dynamics of the Early State*, *Current Anthropology*, 25(1984), p. 368.
3. Morton H.Fried: *op. cit.*, p. 242.

4. Surajit Sinha (ed): *Tribal Polities and State Systems in Pre-colonial Eastern and Northeastern India*. (Calcutta, K.P.Bagchi &Co.,1987), p.xx
5. Hermann Kulke: *Kings and Cults: State Formation and Legitimation in India and South Asia*, reprint ed., (New Delhi,Manohar, 2001), p.92.
6. Surajit Sinha (ed): *op. cit.*, p. xvii. M.N. Srinivas has conceptualized the adoption of caste-culture by the tribes as *sanskritization* in regards to social mobility (M.N. Srinivas: *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India*. (Oxford, 1952). To him *sanskritization* is the process by which a 'low Hindu caste' or tribal or other group, changes its customs, rituals, ideology and way of life in the direction of a high and frequently, twice born caste. M.N.Srinivas: *Social Change in Modern India*, reprint ed., (New Delhi, Orient Longman, 1985), p.6. But in the state formation process it was a *kshatriyazation* of tribe. Hermann Kulke: *op.cit.*, p. 92.
7. *Guru Charita*, v. 2243, p. 488.
8. *Ibid.*, v. 3454, p. 687.
9. *Katha Guru Charita*, vs. 3449-3453, pp.686-687.
10. *Ibid.*, v. 3606, p. 719.
11. *Ibid.*, vs. 3729-3733, p. 743.
12. K.S. Singh: *Tribal Society in India*. (New Delhi. Manohar. 1985), p. 43.
13. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed: *Cooch Beharer Itihas*. (Cooch Behar, The Cooch Behar State Press, 1936), p. 95.
14. *Yogini Tantra*,ch. 13, vs. 2-22.
15. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs.27-71, pp.5-12; *Rajopakhyan*, pp. 3-5; *Kamrupar Buranji*, pp.10-11.
16. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs.123-131, pp.23-25.
17. The *Raj Vamsavali* of Ripunjay Das claims that a Brahmin named Ballavacharyya had converted Visvasimha to the Hinduism. But the *Gandharva Narayanar Vamsavali* (ms) mentions that Kalichandra Bhattacharya, a Brahmin had performed the rituals to bring Visvasimha in the fold of Shaivism.
18. *Rajopakhyan*, p. 41.
19. Surajit Sinha (ed): *op.cit.*, p. xv.

20. The road construction was an important attempt of the Khena kings of the pre-Koch period. The Roads from Kamatapur to Bhutan and from Kamatapur to Rangpur and Bogra were their contributions.
21. The Koch king had their special interest on the construction of tanks .In the present Cooch Behar town there are many tanks which have been excavated by the Cooch Behar State.
22. *Guru Charita, vs. 2230-2234, pp.442-43.*
23. The *Charita Puthis* or the biographies of the Vaishnava saints of the region including Sankardeva, Madhava Deva and Damodar Deva have vividly described the religious teachings of Sankaradeva and popularity of the neo-Vaishnavism .The published biographies such as Ramcharan Thakur: *Guru Charita*. 10<sup>th</sup> ed.. (Guwahati, 2001); Daityari Thakur: *Mahapurusha Sri Sankardeva aru Sri Madhava Devar Jiban Charita* (Nalbari, 1978); Bhusan Dvija: *Mahapurusa Sankaradeva*, edited by Durgabar Barkakati (Jorhat, 1925); Ramananda Dvija: *Guru Charita*, edited by M.Neog, (Nalbari, 1957); Upendra Chandra Lekharu (ed): *Katha Guru Charita*, 4th ed., (Guwahati, Datta Barua Publishing Pvt. Ltd., 2002), etc., have depicted the popularity of the Vaishnavism among the people of the region.
24. *Katha Guru Charita*, p.53.
25. For details about the *satras* of Assam and North Bengal. see, S.N. Sharma: *The New Vaishnavite Movement and the Satra Institutions of Assam*. (Gauhati University, 1966) and Dvijendra Nath Bhakat: *Satrar Samikshyattak Itibritta* (Dhubri, Bhabani Book House, 1995).
26. *Rajopakhyan*, p.16.
27. *Kamakshya Temple Inscription*, see **Appendix B**.
28. From the record available in the Coch Beharer Itihas by Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed it appears that the Kamakshya temple had around 23685 *bighas* of rent-free land. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed: *op.cit.* p. 127.
29. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement*, p. 94. Also see **Plate 7.3**.
30. *Hayagriva Madhav Temple Inscription*, cited in Maheswar Neog (compiled and ed.): *Prachya Sasanavali*, (Guwahati, Assam Prakashan Parishad, 1974), p.143;

*Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, v. 681-683, pp.137-138. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed had estimated an amount of total 54 thousand 300 *bighas* of land, granted to the Hayagriva Madhav temple by Raghudeva Narayan. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed :*op. cit.*, p.125.

31. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op. cit.*, p.545.

32. *Kamatesvari Temple Inscription*, see *Appendix C*; also *Plate 7.2.B*.

33. Prana Narayan granted 44 *jotes* of land to the Jalpesvar temple. These *jotes* came under the revenue assessment in 1891 by the order of the Revenue Departemnt of the Colonial Governement. Order No. 494 L.R. date –17<sup>th</sup> April, 1891.D.Sunder: *Survey and Settlement of the Western Duars in the District of Jalpaiguri, 1889-95*.p.123.

34. The date of construction of the Madan Mahon temple of Cooch Behar is controversial. While the *Rajopakhyan* ascribes the credit of foundation of the temple to King Rup Narayan, other sources have given the same credit to King Prana Narayan (1632-65).

35. See *Plate 7.4.B*.

36. The *hastabood* (statistics) prepared by Mr. Purling, the Collector of Rangpur in 1773. It estimated total land revenue as Rs. 264759 of which Rs. 51878 was the revenue of the land granted to the temples, *zagir* and charity land. *Mercer and Chouvet Report on Cooch Behar*, pp.172-73.

37. Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *op.cit.*, p.544.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 545.

39. *Kamrupar Buranji*, p.38.

40. *Rajopakhyan*, p.24. Present researcher has collected the oral traditions about the temples, from fieldwork carried out at Gosanimary during the period between 2001 and 2004. Also Nripendra Nath Pal (ed): *Gosani Mangal*, 2nd ed., (Calcutta, Anima Prakashani, 1992), pp.138-141.

41. N.N. Vasu: *Social History of Kamrupa (3vols)*, reprint ed.,(Delhi, Northern Book Center, 1983), *vol. II*, p.61.

42. See *Plate 5.5 C*.

43. See *Plate 5.5.D*.

44. The *Deories* were appointed from the non-Brahmins particularly from the local tribal people and lower caste Hindus.
45. N.N.Majumdar: A Study of Tribe–Caste Continuum and the process of Sanaskritization among the Bodo Speaking Tribes of the Garo Hills, in K.S.Singh (ed): *The Tribal Situation in India* ,(New Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass ,1996),pp.263-270.
46. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, vs. 265-268 and vs. 291-294. p.60.
47. *Raja Vamsavali*, Ms. f. 9.
48. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed: *op. cit.*, 130.
49. *Raj Vamsavali*, Ms. (N.B.S.L. ms. no. 4), f. 9; P.C. Choudhury: *A Catalogue of the Sanaskrita Manuscripts of the DHAS*, (Gauhati, DHAS, 1961), p.58.
50. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed: *op.cit.*, p. 131.
51. *Ibid.* . p.154.
52. *Ibid.* . p.164.
53. For specimen see *Ibid.*, pp104-105.
54. *Kamrupar Buranji*, pp.69-84.
55. S.N.Sen (ed): *Prachin Bangla Patra Sankalan* (Calcutta, Calcutta University, 1942). *letter no. 1.*
56. Pitambar Siddhantavagis: *Markandeya Purana*, Ms. (N.B.S.L. ms. no. 08 and 13). f.1a and 1b.
57. Pitambar Shiddhantavagis: *Bhagavata Purana (Dasham Skandha)*, ms. (NBSL, ms.no 58).
58. Ajay Kumar Chakravarty: *Literatures in the Kamata-Koch Bihar Raj Darbar* (Dhubri, 1964), p.85.
59. *Ibid.*
60. *Ibid.*, p.86.
61. *Naradiya Purana*, ms., (NBSL. Ms. 28).
62. Ajay Kumar Chakravarty :*op.cit.*, p.67.
63. *Ibid.*, p.68.
64. Ananta Kandali: *Mahabharata (Rajasuya)*, ms. (NBSL. ms.no101.).
65. Kavishekhar: *Kirata Parva*, ms. (NBSL. ms.no 90).
66. Srinath Brahmin: *Mahabharata (Adi Parva)*, (NBSL. ms.no. 77.)

67. *Draupadi Swayamvara*, ms. (NBSL. ms.no 78).
68. *Ibid*.
69. Sashi Bhushan Das Gupta: *A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengal Manuscripts Preserved in the State Library of Cooch Behar*, (Cooch Behar, 1948), p. 99.
70. Dvija Ram Sarasvati: *Mahabharata (Visma Parva)* ,Ms. (NBSL ,Ms., no.94).
71. Dimbeswar Neog: *Asamiya Sahityar Buranjit Bhumuki* (Jorhat, 1863 Saka (1941 A.D.), p.47.
72. Birinchi Kumar Barua: *History of Assamese Literatures*, (New Delhi. Sahitya Academy. 1964), p. 24.
73. Maheswar Neog: *Sankaradeva*, reprint ed.. (New Delhi. National Book Trust. 2000), p.49.
74. Sankardeva had stressed on *sravana* and *kirtana* form of *bhakti* although other forms such as- *smarana* (remembering the god), *pada sevana* (serving the feet of the god), *archana* (the rite of ceremonial worship of the image of the deity), *vandana* (salutation and submission at the feet of the god). etc: were not discouraged.
75. Sankardeva and Madhava Deva: *Kirtana Ghasha O Hazari Ghosha*, published by Chidananda Das (Calcutta. 1298 B.S.),p. 36.
76. Birinchi Kumar Barua :*op.cit.* , p. 36.
77. *Ibid*, p.50.
78. *Ibid.*,p.147.
79. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed :*op. cit.*, p.152.
80. The manuscript copy of the *Adikanda, Sri Krishna Janma Rahasya* and *Bhakti Ratnavali* are available at the North Bengal State Library (NBSL), Cooch Behar.
81. Birinchi Kumar Barua: *op.cit.*,59.
82. *10<sup>th</sup> canto of the Mahabharata*, cited in Dimbeswar Neog: *op.cit.*, p. 60.
83. Ajay Kumar Chakravarty: *op.cit.*, p. 49.
84. *Ibid*.
85. The *Rajopakhyan* has mentioned the existence of this history book till the 1252 B.S.*Rajopakhyan*, p.xvii.
86. Ajay Kumar Chakravarty: *op.cit.* , p.100.
87. Surajit Sinha(ed):*op.cit.*, p.xxiii.

88. Morton H.Fried :*op.cit.*, p.242.
89. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali, vs.* 325-328.
90. *Ibid. Vs.*336-337.
91. For example, Suniti Kumar Chatterji: *Kirata Jana Kriti*, reprint ed., (Calcutta. Asiatic Society, 1898), p. 118.
92. Fieldwork carried out in the following villages--Madhya Kamakshya Guri, Dakshin Kamakshya Guri, Mahakal Guri and Khovar Danga of Alipur Duar Sub division. Jalpaiguri District, and Koch villages of West Garo Hills. Meghalaya.
93. D.Sunder: *Survey and Settlement of the Westren Duars*, p.56; Charu Chandra Sanyal: *Rajbanshis of North Bengal*, reprint ed., (Kolkata, The Asiatic Society, 2002), p193.
94. D.Sunder: *Survey and Settlement of the Western Duars*, p.57.
95. Charu Chadra Sanyal: *Rajbanshis of North Bengal*, reprint ed., (Kolkat. The Asiatic Society, 2003), p146. The priests of the Koch-Rajbanshis are known in different names such as –*Adhikari, Deoshi, Bhouria, Kirtania, Ojha, etc.* The *Adhikaris* perform the worships of the chief deities .The worships of *Bhandani* and *Mahakal* who are the synthesized form of the deities of tribal and Hindu pantheon, generally perform by the *Deoshis*.
96. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali, vs.* 97-103.
97. Charu Chandra Sanyal: *op.cit.*, p.137.
98. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
99. See *Plate 7.5.D*.
100. *Rajopakhyan*, pp.11-12.
101. *Ibid.*, p.22.
102. See *Plate 7.2.D*.
103. *Garam (Gram) Thakur* is the savior of the villages. The villagers worship this deity together with Salewari, Mahakal, Sanyashi Thakur, Tista, Paglapid, Kali, Bishahari and Lakshmi.
104. D.Sunder: *Survey and Settlement of the Western Duars*, p.71.
105. Herman Kulke :*op.cit.*, p.94.
106. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali, vs.* 230-239.
107. *Rajopakhyan*, p.15.

108. *Guru Charita*, vs. 2443.

109. *Ain-i-Akbari*, vol. I, pp. 362-363.

110. Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed :*op. cit.*, p. 154.

111. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

## Conclusion

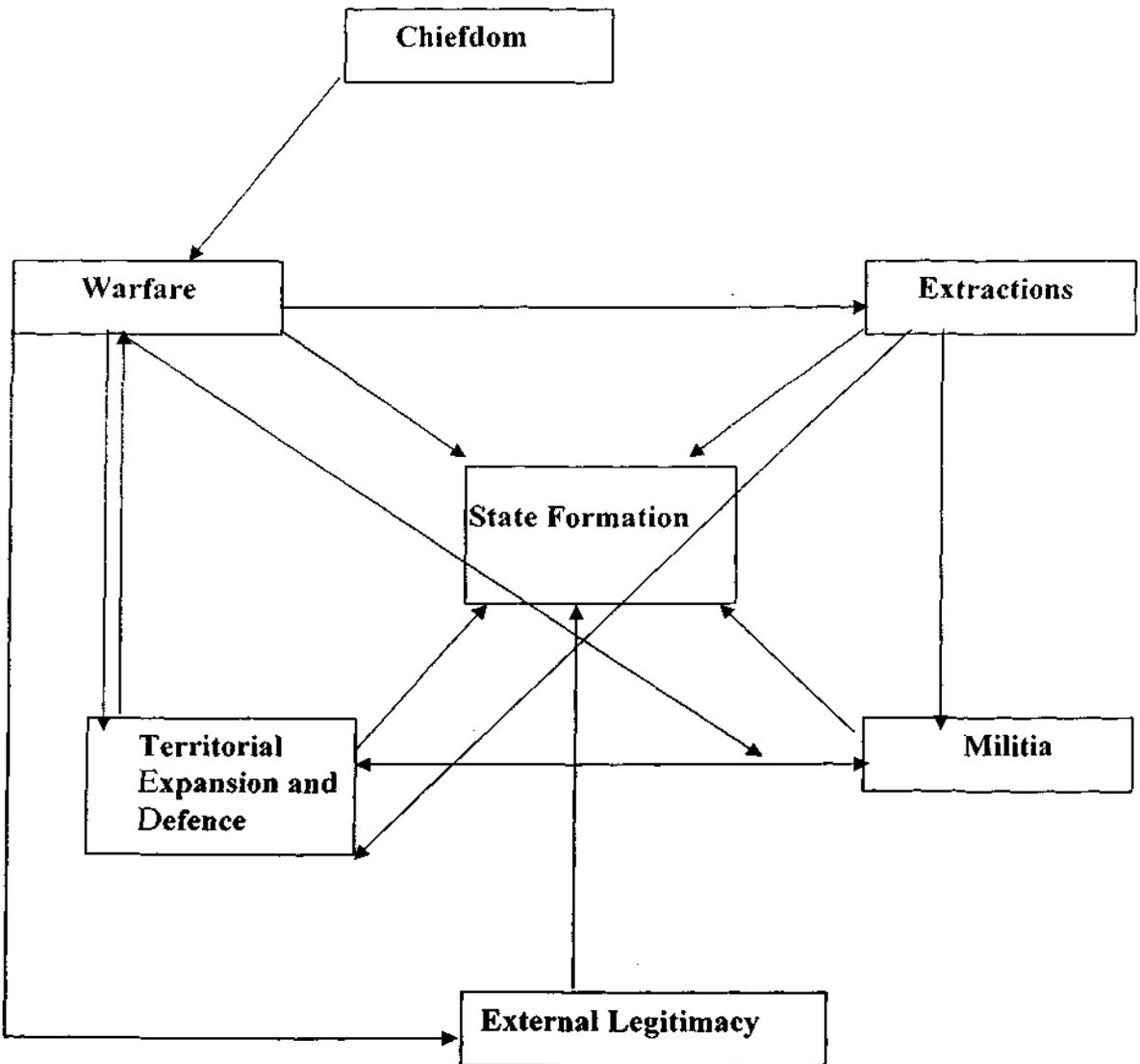
The transition of the Koches from their tribal identity to the founder of a state in pre-colonial period was a significant development in the history of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. This transition and their societal evolution in many respects are identical with the evolutionary model of state formation propounded by the anthropologists. But the processes of centralization of power, institutionalization of leadership, formation of the state-structure and legitimization aspect of state formation in our study are quite distinctive.

In our study it has been observed that the clan based villages of the Koch and Mech tribes were transformed into a chiefdom under the leadership of Haria Mandal (Mech) in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century when the Tist-Brahmaputra valley was going through a stage of political instability with mutual conflicts among the Bhuiyans and the tribal-chiefs. Inter-tribal and tribal-nontribal feuds provided an opportunity to the Koches to establish chiefdom. The Koches eventually established a kingdom by materializing some long-term dynamics of their sociopolitical changes. The kingdom was although divided in 1581 A.D. for internal dissention in the ruling family and faced regular pressure from outside but their state survived till 1772 A.D. with independent status. This transition of a tribal chiefdom into a kingdom reveals the following characteristics.

It has been observed that the state formation of the Koches was significantly linked with the incessant warfare since the beginning. Tribal chief Visu together with other leaders of clan villages had started aggressive warfare and brought larger territories under his control. The Bhuiyans, inspite of their level best efforts could not stop the tribal force of the Koches and Meches proceeding towards a state system. Territorial expansion and the plunder (of booty) from the Bhuiyans and other tribal chiefs under the leadership of Visu had elevated the status of a chief to a king. So Visu assumed the high-sounding name like-**Visvasimha**. It was the beginning of the sociopolitical transformation of the tribes in a multi-ethnic societal format of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley.

The 'warfare' initiated by Visvasimha was a major dynamics for the further growth of the state because similar emerging tribal state of Northeast India, Bhutan and Muslim power of Bengal were also engaged in ceaseless warfare for their respective interest. So (after Visvasimha, Nara Narayan(1540-87) had reinforced the aggressive warfare .By 1564 he subdued several tribal states of Northeast India such as - Ahom ,Manipur,Dimrua ,Kachar ,Dimasha and Khyram. In the northern frontier, Bhutan accepted the suzerainty of the Koches. This successful warfare resulted into the collection of heavy indemnities and tributes, which had a significant role in the further development of the state-system including the monetization of economy.

Figure 8.1: Warfare and State Formation.



As the present study suggests, the aggressive warfare had increased the territorial size of the kingdom and it reached to its climax during the reign of Nara Narayan. Under him the kingdom was extended from the *Kushi* river in the west to Narayanpur in the east and from the Bhutan frontier in the north to the Mughal frontier at Rangpur in the south. But the Koches did not provincialise the vast territory. Its inevitable outcomes were the division of the kingdom and the beginning of the internal conflicts. Lakshmi Narayan (1587-1627) as the king of the western branch (Cooch Behar) and Raghudeva Narayan (1581-1603) as the king of the eastern branch (Koch-Hajo) became engaged in the mutual conflicts and warfare. It eventually turned them towards the defensive warfare. The Mughals and the Ahoms, two aggressive powers, appropriated this situation and began their aggression in the Tista-Brahmaputra valley. Lakshmi Narayan accepted the Mughal suzerainty for a short-time while Parikshit Narayan (1603-1613), son of Raghudev was vanquished by the Mughals and eventually the Ahom supremacy was established in the Brahmaputra valley. Hence, the Koch kingdom was reduced to a small territory of western part of the former kingdom. However, King Prana Narayan (1632-1665) revived the political status of state through warfare, both the aggressive and the defensive; against the Mughals and the Ahoms.

The subsequent rulers of the Koch kingdom continued the defensive warfare. But regular and repeated Mughal invasions from the south (Bengal) led the Koches to accept the military assistance from the north i.e. Bhutan in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. Assistance, on the contrary established the Bhutanese hegemony over the Koch state. So expulsion of the Bhutanese interference from the state became the primary task for the Koch state which was completed with help of the East India Company in 1773 A.D. But the Anglo-Cooch Behar Treaty concluded with the East India Company in 1773 had established a permanent supremacy of the Britishers over the Koches for which the Koch kingdom lost its independent status.

So 'warfare was the primary causative of the state formation of the Koches. Through the aggressive warfare, the Koches established the kingdom and got the territorial size as an essential requisite of the state. But mutual warfare reduced the territory and allowed the interventions of other neighbouring powers. Defensive warfare had the major role in the maintenance of sovereignty of the state failure of which caused the subordination and loss of independence of the kingdom'.

Formation and development of the 'Koch militia' was an essential byproduct of the warfare as has been observed in the present study. In the initial stage of state formation, Visvasimha did not have any organized army equipped with advanced techniques of warfare but had the control over the tribal force equipped with the guerilla warfare. Guerrilla warfare was the key factor for the repeated success of Chilarai and Nara Narayan against the Northeast Indian tribal states in the 1560s. This technique was further utilized by the subsequent Koch rules.

The Koches, however, since the beginning initiated the adoption of technology in defence. Visvasimha's one chief goal in warfare was to plunder the arms and weapons of the Bhuiyans. Even he inducted military strategy from the Mughal and Ahoms the military administration. The military administration with several hierarchical posts, however, was not the wholesale adoption. Local factors were also taken into consideration. The subsequent Koch rulers also carried out the policy of adoption of military tactics in the military department. In spite of it Koch state was dependent to the tribal-peasant militia. It was a major weakness of the Koches and they had taken the military assistance from the neighbouring powers, particularly since the early 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D..

(The economic stimulus from the warfare was although an irregular feature the Koches brought a vast tract of the fertile land under their control. So the accumulations of surplus from the agricultural land and other sources, both in kind and cash (and in the form of service); became the main target of the state since the 1560s. In the chapter V of the present study it has been observed that the 'simple technology of tribal mode of production' began to be replaced by the advanced agriculture techniques that caused peasantization of the tribals and increased the rate of surplus generation. It was a great stimulus for the state's economic viability solidarity. Technological acculturation of the tribals of the Tista-Brahmaputra valley has also been noticed in the crafts and small-scale industries.

Exploitation of surplus in the form of land revenue and 'service' by the state had ensured state's income, which was supplanted by the additional collection from the trade and commerce. Circulation of the *Narayani Tanka* by the Koch state had monetized the economy and developed the trade and commerce in favour of the Koch state because it became a common currency in North Bengal, Assam and Bhutan. So

Bengal-Bhutan trade and Assam-Bengal trade carried through the Koch state had strengthened the economic stability of the state.

‘Emergence of the state is linked with the concentration of power and bureaucratization of the administration for the managerial functions of the state and separation of the king from the kinsmen’ as explained in the chapter VI. First step of concentration of power was the formation of the ruling section from the tribes under the leadership of the chief who was elected by the clan village leaders. Chief was declared as king when the territorial size of the chieftdom was increased considerably with the rapid success in aggressive warfare. The kingship was declared as divine and the fictitious lineage was attached to its origin. Like the Ahoms, Kacharis, Jayantias, and other tribal rulers of contemporary Northeast India, the Koches constructed the myth of their origins from a deity of the Hindu pantheon. So Shiva was propagated as father of Visvasimha. The kingship became the monopoly of the particular kin i.e. the family of Visvasimha. Sisvasimha, brother of the king, was appointed as the *Raikat* (protector of the fort and the military general). The clan based village leaders who were the active associates in the initial stage of state formation were, however, employed as bureaucrats, ministers and *karzizs* (officers). Since the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the *Chhaura Nazir* (head of the military affairs) was also appointed from the king’s own kin. For the civil administration, the post of *Dewans* was created which had generally filled with the Brahmins and the Kayasthas, but since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century it also became the monopoly of the Visvasimha’s kin. The Kingship, *Raikatship*, *Nazirship* and *Karziship* became hereditary. So with the transition of the chieftdom into a kingdom, the kin and clans of the tribal Koches and Meches were transformed into a ruling section. The ruling section had rapidly detribalized its social identity through the adoption of the non-tribal cultures, particularly the Hinduism, and it achieved the top rank in the society of the former tribes. ‘So the formation of a ruling section from the kin and clans, with centralized power and hereditary rights, and the social formation went together’.

Legitimacy of wielding political authority, justification of centralization of power and rights of exploitation of surplus as we have observed in our case had been materialized by the state through the redistribution of concentrated surplus and ‘adoption and diffusion of non-tribal cultural ideologies’. Construction of public works

and building of temples were the major sectors of surplus redistribution for legitimating political power.

State patronage to the non-tribal cultural ideologies like neo-*Vaishnavism* and the Brahmanical views of caste society, as we have observed in chapter VII, had significantly contributed to the cultural change of the people of the region. The institutions of the *Vaishnavism* (*satra* and *namghar*) brought the tribal and the non-tribal people of the region, particularly of Lower Assam, into a common cultural linguistic homogeneity and the state-patronage to the *satra-culture* indirectly enhanced the social control of the state. (Apart from the *Vaishnavism*, adoption of the caste ideologies by the state (adoption from below) and its diffusion to the region (from above) brought significant changes in the tribal-culture. Its inevitable outcome was the *sanskritization* of the tribal-culture. Essence of the caste-culture had been diffused by the state through the building of the temples of the deities of the Hindu pantheon like-male deity Shiva/Mahakal and female deity Chandi /Durga /Gossani who are identical with the tribal deities called Rhishi and Jog respectively. Employment of the Brahmins as the priest of these newly built temples had accelerated the process of the cultural change, which has been conceptualized as *hinduization* or *sanskritization* of the tribals. The Koch kings also carried out the 'cultural diffusion from above' through the state patronage to the translations of the sacred literatures like *puranas*, epics, *smritis* and other scriptures into the vernaculars, which were considered as the source of the social and political laws. It contributed to the 'linguistic sanskritization'.

The state also maintained the primordial cultures of the tribes. '*Sanskritization* from above' and 'continuity of the primordial culture' inevitably led to the growth of cultural synthesis or miscegenation in the region. Cultural synthesis has been noticed in the up gradation of tribal culture (to the caste) and localization of the Hinduism with the features of the tribalism. So the tribal animism was transformed to the worship of Hindu deities with localized form. So 'cultural synthesis is symbiotic to the legitimization of the concentrated sociopolitical power.'

The process of the political formations initiated by the Koches and the Meches in the Tista-Brahamaputra valley was evolutionary because of symbiotic relationships between the process of state formation and the evolution of the tribal culture. But their political formation was completed with the materialization of other prerequisites of a

secondary state in such a region where organized state system had a great tradition and influence. So, historically this process was a mixed one.

The state formation process of the Koches is distinctive from that of the much-discussed concepts attached to the states of pre-colonial India. Marxian notion of the 'Oriental despotism' having an 'Asiatic mode of production' of unchangeable characteristics with a despotic ruler, external warfare and internal resource exploitation, can not describe the process of cultural change including the mode of production and its symbiosis with the state formation. Similarly, the Koch state is not identical with the conventional notion of India states having a unitary and centrally organized strong bureaucracy and defined territory because of changing administrative structure and territorial size of the Koch state. Moreover, the conventional notion cannot describe the formation of state from the tribalism.

The concept of 'segmentary state system' tested in the pre-colonial context of South India and the Rajput states, inspite of its tangential similarities is beyond the scope of its applicability to the Koch kingdom and Northeast Indian tribal states. Although there is a similarity with the segmentary state particularly in the 'continuum of governance formation' but the Koch kingdom did not have numerous (subordinate) centers of power and political domains, which was a primary feature of the segmentary state.

The 'Indian feudalism', attached to the medieval Indian states; originated through the process of feudalisation of the centralized state; has its little applicability to the Koch kingdom .As it was not originated through the decentralization process but from the tribalism with the evolutionary cultural process only in the region where centralized state system and the decentralization had a great influence .The decline of the Kamata kingdom in the last decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the emergence of the centralized Koch kingdom in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century do not prove the feudalisation process .However ,this kingdom had certain characters identical with the Indian feudalism such as-land-grants to the religious institutions ,Brahmins and individuals ; and (limited) military and official arrangement through the *zagir* system .But instead of decentralization of power the grantees enhanced the sociopolitical control of the state



as they were acted as the catalyst of cultural change. From the military point of view it was more tribal than feudal. So, inspite of existence certain feudal characters in the kingdom, theoretically it was not the replica of the feudal state of pre-colonial India.

While the models of state formation (already conceptualized) in regards to pre-colonial Indian context have their little applicability to explain the emergence of the state from the tribalism, the Koch state is thus distinctive in its formation. Emergence from tribalism, continuous warfare, transformation of mode of production, centralized feudality and cultural change are the major area of distinctiveness. The basic trends of the Koch state formation are structurally and processually identical with the pre-colonial Eastern and Northeast Indian tribal states. But the Koch state has its distinctiveness in its emergence and development of state structure than these tribal states too. Dimasa, Meitei and Jayantia states were originated through the evolutionary process without outside influence while the Mizo state formation was the ultimate result of the inter-tribal and intra-tribal feuds. The Ahoms were immigrants with the hydraulic culture and politically evolutionary at least in its structural development. But unlike them, the Koches were settled in the region prior to their emergence as the political identity. But it was evolutionary in its culture including mode of production.

So emergence of the Koch state in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a whole 'was a situational transition began with the inter-tribal warfare, territorial formation, institutionalization of leadership and changes in the mode of production of the tribals. Appropriation of surplus generated through the peasantization of the tribals, technological acculturation and circulation of the *Narayani Tanka*; had strengthened the economic viability of the state. Centralization of political power within a ruling section of the tribe had been legitimized through the surplus redistribution and adoption-diffusion of non-tribal cultural ideologies which accelerated the process of transition of the tribalism into a state'.

# Appendices

## Appendix A Rulers of the Koch Kingdom (c 1515-1775 A.D.).

King	Reign
Visva Simha	c 1515-1540.A.D
Nara Narayan	1540-1587 A.D.
Laksmi Narayan	1587-1627A.D.
Raghudeva Narayan (Eastern Branch)	1581-1603 A.D.
Parikshit Narayan (Eastern Branch)	1 603-1613 A.D.
Bir Narayan (Main Branch)	1627-1632A.D.
Prana Narayan	1632-1665 A.D.
Moda Narayan	1665-1680 A.D.
Vasudeva Narayan	1680-1682.A.D.
Mahindra Narayan	1682-1693 A.D.
Rup Narayan	c1693-1714A.D.
Upendra Narayan	1714-1763A.D.
Devendra Narayan	1763-1765A.D.
Dhairjendra Narayan	1765-1770 A.D.
Rajendra Narayan	1770-1772A.D.
Dharendra Narayan	1772-1775 A.D.

This table is based on the Koch genealogies (*vamsavalis*), chronicles (*buranjis*), government reports and the official history of the kingdom like-Jaynath Munshi: Rajopakhyan (Translation into English by Rev. Robinson, Calcutta, Baptist Mission Press, 1874), S.K.Bhuiyan (ed): *Kamrupar Buranji*, 3rd ed., (Guwahati, DHAS, 1987), *A Brief History of the Indian States in Bengal* (Calcutta, Central Publication Branch, 1928), *Mercer and Chouvet Report*, Harendra Narayan Chaudhuri: *The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement* (Cooch Behar ,The Cooch Behar State Press 1903 ), Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed :*Cooch Beharer Itihas* (Cooch Behar ,The Cooch Behar State Press ,1936),etc.

## Appendix B

### The Kamakshya Temple Inscription.

#### Sanskrit Text.

ওঁ লোকানুগ্রহ-কারকঃ করুণয়া পার্থো ধনুর্বিবদ্যয়া  
দানেনাপি দধীচি - কর্নো সদৃশো মর্যাদয়ারস্তানিধিঃ।  
নানা-শাস্ত্র বিচার চারুচরিতঃ কন্দর্প রূপোজ্জ্বলঃ  
কামাখ্যা - চরনার্চকো বিজয়তে শ্রীমল্লদেবো নৃপঃ।।  
প্রসাদমদ্রি - দুহিতু শচরনারবিন্দ -  
ভক্তাকরোওদননুজো রবনীল শৈলে।  
শ্রী শুরূদেব ইসমুল্লসিতো পালন  
শাকে তুরঙ্গ গজ বেদ শশাংক সংখেত।।  
তস্যৈব প্রিয় সোদরঃ পৃথুযশা বীরেন্দ্র মৌলিস্থলী  
মানিক্যং ভজমান কল্পবিটপী নীলাচলে মঞ্জুলম্।  
প্রাসাদং মুনিগা বেদ শশভূৎশাকে শিলা রাজিভি  
দেবী ভক্তিমতাং বরো রচিতবান শ্রীশুরূপূর্বধ্বজ :।।

#### Translation.

Glory to the king Malla Deva, who by virtue of his mercy, is kind to the people, who in archery is like Arjun, and in charity like Dadhicchi and Karna; he is like an ocean of all goodness, and he is well-versed in many *shastras*; his character is excellent in beauty, he is as bright as Kandarpa, he is a worshiper of Kamakshya .His younger brother Sukladeva built this temple of bright stones on the Nila hillock, for the worship of the goddess Durga, in 1487 *Saka*. His beloved brother Sukladhvaja again, with universal fame, the crown of the greatest heroes, who, like the fabulous Kalpataru; gave all that was devotee asked of him, the chief of all devotees of the goddess; constructed this beautiful temple with heaps of the stones on the Nila hill in the 1487 *Saka*.

## Appendix C

### The Kan.atesvari Temple Inscription.

#### Sanskrit Text.

*Om ,nama Ganeshyaya ,*

*Sammattadvishadekajittarbhujadanda prataparjyam*

*Kridakandukabegdvidisha Sri PranaBhumipate.*

*Sakabde naganagamarganan himajyotirnirmite nirmita:*

*Sribhajakabi mandalenabhajta bhabatobhavanimatha 1587.*

#### Original script.

ও নমঃ শ্রীগনেশায় ॥

৭ সম্মতা দ্বিষদেকজিত্তরভূজাদস্ত পঞ্চম

ক্রীড়া কন্দুক বেশবর্জিতদিশঃ শ্রীপ্রানভূমিপতে :।

শাপদে নগনাগ মার্গণ হিমজ্যোতির্ন্মিতে নিশ্চিত

শ্রীভজো করিমন্ডন ভজত ভবোঁয়া ভবানীমঠঃ ॥ ১৫৮৭

#### Translation:

Salute to Sri Ganesha.

The King Prana (Narayan) who had extended the (culture of) games and sports and (construction of) building in all directions, being guided by noble motive, could defeat enemies by strength of his own arms .In *Saka1587*, the king built this temple to worship the Goddess Bhavani who is worshiped by poets and gentlemen.

## Appendix D

### The Anglo-Cooch Behar Treaty, 1773 A.D.

**Articles of the treaty signed between the Honorable East India Company and Durrinder Narayan, the King of Cooch Behar, 1773.**

Durrinder Narain, Rajah of Cooch Behar, having represented to the Honorable the President and Council of Calcutta the present distressed state of the country, owing to its being harassed by the neighbouring independent Rajahs, who are league to depose

him, the Honourable the President and Council, from a love of justice and desire of assisting the distressed, have agreed to send a force, consisting of four companies of Sepoys and a field piece for the protection of the said Rajah and his country ,against his enemies , and the following conditions are mutually agreed on :---

1<sup>st</sup> ---That the said Rajah will immediately pay into the hands of the Collector of Rungpoor 50000 Rupees, to defray the expenses of the force sent to assist him.

2<sup>nd</sup> ---That if more than 50000 Rupees are expended ,the Rajah will make it good to the Honorable the English East India Company ,but in case any part of it remains unexpended that it be delivered back .

3<sup>rd</sup>---That the Rajah will acknowledge subjection to the English East India Company upon his country being cleared of his enemies, and will allow the Cooch Behar country to be annexed to the Province of Bengal.

4<sup>th</sup>---That the Rajah further agrees to make over to the English East India Company one half of the revenue of Cooch Behar for ever.

5<sup>th</sup> ---That the other moiety shall remain to the Rajah and his heirs for ever provided he is firm in his allegiance to the Honorable United East India Company.

6<sup>th</sup> ---That in order to ascertain the value of the Cooch Behar country, the Rajah will deliver a fair hustobood of his district into the hands of such person, as the Honorable the President and Council of Calcutta shall think proper to depute for that purpose, upon which valuation the annual mulguzary, which the Rajah is to pay, shall be established.

7<sup>th</sup> ---That the amount of the mulguzary, settled by such person as the Honorable the East India Company shall depute, shall be perpetual.

8<sup>th</sup> ---That the Honorable English East India Company shall always assist the said Rajah with a force when he has occasion for it for the defence of the country, and Rajah bearing the expense.

9<sup>th</sup> ---That this Treaty shall remain in force for the space of two years, or till such time as advices may be received from the Court of Directors, empowering the President and Council to ratify the same forever.

This Treaty signed, sealed and concluded by the Honorable the President and Council at Fort William, the fifth day of April 1773, on the one part, and by the

Durrinder Narayan, Rajah of Cooch Behar, at Behyar Fort, the 6<sup>th</sup> Maug 1179 Bengal style, on the other part.

N.B. Original spelling has been retained.

### Appendix E

#### List of the extinct *Satras*.

The Vaishnava saints established many *satras* in deferent parts of the Koch kingdom under the patronage of the Koch kings. But with the decline of the kingdom most of the *satras* began to loss their prosperity. Name of some extinct *satras* has been given below with the name of the founder, date and location of the *satras*.

Name of the Satra	Founder	Date	Location.
Jangal	Sankar. deva	16 <sup>th</sup> Century	Hakama
Kharmuja	Sankar. deva	16 <sup>th</sup> Century	-----
Patkata	Sankar. deva	16 <sup>th</sup> Century	-----
Poravita	Sankar. deva	16 <sup>th</sup> Century	-----
Sankarghola	Sankar. deva	16 <sup>th</sup> century	Vairav Pahar
Hakama	Madav Deva	1590-1595	Hakama
Ultapani	Madhav Deva	16 <sup>th</sup> Century	-----
Luki	Daityari Thakur	1625-1650	-----
Malcha	Daityari Takur	1626-1650	-----
Gopalpur	Banamali Deva	1632-1665	-----
Betbari	Manahar Deva	1600-1650	-----
Futkibari	Khalta Medhi	17 <sup>th</sup> Century	-----
Mather Jhar	Damodar Deva	17 <sup>th</sup> Century	Mather Jhar
Bilar Par	Harihar Ata	18 <sup>th</sup> Century	Ambari, Cooch Behar.
Betana	Harihar Ata	18 <sup>th</sup> Century	-----
Ghugumari	Gopal Deva	18 <sup>th</sup> Century	Cooch Behar.

There were many other *satras* established in kingdom which became untraceable

So further research is needed to identify the Vaishna

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*The Kamakshya Temple Inscription:* This inscription has recorded the rebuilding of the Kamakshya temple by Malladeva (Nara Narayan) and Sukladhvaj (Chilarai) in the *Saka* 1487(see *Appendix B*).

*The Kamatesvari Temple Inscription:* The inscription engraved in the temple of Kamatesvari has recorded its building by the King Prana Narayan in the *Saka* 1587(see *Plate 7.3. B* and *Appendix C*).

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## Glossary.

*Adhikary* = Priest of the Koch-Rajbanshis.

*Ahudi* = An officer for the military administration.

*Amatya* = Minister.

*Ankiyanat* = Mono-act devotional play, composed by the Vaishnava saints of the Tista - Brahputra valley, generally in the *Brajavuli* dialect.

*Aranya-Dharma* = Life of the forests.

*Aush* = A kind of early rice.

*Bachari* = War boat.

*Bandar* = Seat of trade and commerce where the merchants reside permanently.

*Bargit* = Devotional songs composed by the Vaishnava saints.

*Bargorakhiya* = Chief cowherd.

*Baro* = 12

*Barua* = Naval officer.

*Bathouism* = Traditional religious practice of the Meches.

*Bhakti* = Devotion.

*Bhandar* = Treasury.

*Bhandar Thakur* = Treasurer and superintendent of mint.

*Bhuiyan* = Chief of an estate with considerable sociopolitical power.

*Bigha* = An unit of measurement of land where 1 *bigha* = 0.33 acre or 1 acre = 3 *bighas*.

*Bish* = An unit of measurement of land.

*Boa* = A kind of rice.

*Brahmattar* = Rent-free lands, donated to the Brahmins.

*Buranji* = Chronicles.

*Byapary* = Small traders

*Caste-culture* = Culture of the caste-oriented Indian society.

*Chawkidar* = Frontier guard.

*Chakla* = A unit of revenue yielding tract.

*Chao* = Chief (of the Ahom tribe)

*Charita Puthi* = Biography of the Vaishnava saints.

*Chhatra* = Royal umbrella

*Chheka* = A popular dish of the Koch -Rajvanshis .

*Chira*= Parched rice

*Choudhury* =Revenue collector.

*Chowki*=An outpost.

*Daivagna*= Astrologer.

*Deodhai*= Tribal priest.

*Deori*= Servants attached to the temples.

*Deoshi*=Tribal priest.

*Deva Raja*=King of Bhutan.

*Devi* =A female deity of the Hindu pantheon

*Devottar*=Land granted to the temple.

*Dewan/Dewan Deo*=Head of the civil administration

*Dheyan* = Governor of the Koch state in its conquered territory.

*Dhopdhara* =Officer in charge of sports.

*Duar*= Mountain passes between India and Bhutan.

*Durga/Chandi/Bhavani/Bhagavati* = A female deity of the Hindu pantheon

*Dvari*= Gateman.

*Dyuta*= Ambassador.

*Elaka* =Territory .

*Endi*=A kind of silk produced in North Bengal and Assam.

*Faujdar* = Military general.

*Garmali*= A police constable of the Koch kingdom.

*Gaudesvar* = Lord of Gauda.

*Ghani* =Cattle powered mill for the production of mustard oil.

*Ghat*= Ferry.

*Ghani* = Cattle powered oil mill

*Gossain*= Spiritual guide.

*Guru*= Preceptor.

*Handi*= Earthen pot.

*Hanuman Danda* = Monkey Scepter

*Hastabood* = Statistics.

*Hat*= A weakly market place.

*Hinduization* = Process of elevation of the non-Hindus to the status of the Hindu castes.

*Izara* = Deed of revenue collection.

*Jagir/Zagir*= 'Land' given to the state official and the servants.

*Jakoi/Zakoi*=A triangular fishing instrument.

*Jamabandi* =Kind of revenue assignment prevailed in the Mughal Empire and the Koch state.

*Jhum*= Shifting cultivation

*Jote* = Revenue yielding tract.

*Kamar* =Blacksmith.

*Kamateswar/ Kameswar* =Lord of Kamata.

*Kamrupi-Brahmin* = Brahmins from Kamarupa.

*Kandali*= An expert in debate.

*Karzi*.= Officer.

*Kataki*= Ambassador.

*Kavacha* = Amulet.

*Kayastha* = A mixed caste of the Hindu society.

*Khai*= Puffed rice.

*Khasnabish* = Chief secretary to the state.

*Kirata*=Tribe/Tribal

*Kirtana* =Narrative poem/song .

*Kodal* = Hoe

*Kote* = Fort

*Kshatriya* = Name of a caste which stands second in the caste-hierarchy.

*Kshatrization* = Process of elevation of the non-*kshatriya* people to the *ksatriya* status.

*Kumar* =Potter.

*Lakheraj* =Land, granted to the individual as a special reward.

*Latkan*=A kind of citrus fruit.

*Mahar/Mohur* = Gold coins.

*Majumdar* =Secretary to the state.

*Mahal*= Estate/Revenue yielding tract

*Maitihila Brahmin* = Brahmin from Mithila

*Mal*= Land revenue.

*Mandal*= Chief

*Mantri* = Minister.

*Mlechcha* = Tribal

- Muga*= A kind of silk.
- Mutha* =Mating grass.
- Namghar*= Chanting house or prayer hall for the Vaishnavas.
- Nazir/Chhatra Nazir/Nazir Deo*= Head of the military affairs.
- Naziran land* = Land possessed by the *Nazir*.
- Narayani Tanka*= Coins circulated by the Koch kings. .
- Paik*= An adult male who had to serve the state.
- Pan* =Betel leave.
- Pandit* =Taught men, law officer.
- Pargana* =An unit of the administration/ A long standing geographically compact unit of villages.
- Parva*= Canto of any text..
- Patkumar* = Prince /heir-apparent.
- Pirpal*=Land donated to the mosque.
- Peshkash* =Tribute.
- Petbhata*= Land granted to the relatives of the Koch kings.
- Pirpal* = Land donated to the Islamic institutes and religious purposes.
- Poa-bandha* = A kind of land revenue assignment prevailed in the Koch kingdom.
- Puja*= Worship.
- Pura*= An unit of land measurement where one *pura* is equivalent to four *bighas* or 1 *pura*=1.33 acre.
- Purana*= Mythology which contain historical tale.
- Raikat* = Protector of the fort and the military general of the Koch kingdom.
- Rajachhatra* = Royal Umbrella
- Rajguru* = Spiritual guide to the king.
- Rajmata* = Mother of the king.
- Rajpuruhit* = Priest of the court.
- Rajshabha* =Royal court.
- Rayat* = Cultivator
- Sajwal* = Revenue collector.
- Sanaskritization* = Process of adoption of purified culture by the non-castes.
- Sanskritized* = The tribals who abandoned the primordial culture and adopted the non-tribal cultural marker.

*Sarah*= Big earthen pot.

*Shastra* = Religious and mythological scripture.

*Satra* =Monastery of the Vaishnavas .

*Senapati*= Military general.

*Skandha* = Canto

*Suba*= Province

*Subader* = Governor

*Takshal*=Mint

*Tangan*=A kind of Bhutanese horse.

*Tantricism* = Culture of the *Tantra* .

*Vaidya*= Physician.

*Vaishnavism* = Religion and philosophy of the Vaishnavas.

*Vaishnavite* =Those who elevated to the status of the Vaishnava from non-vaishnava status.

*Vaishnavization* = Process of elevation to the Vaishnava culture.

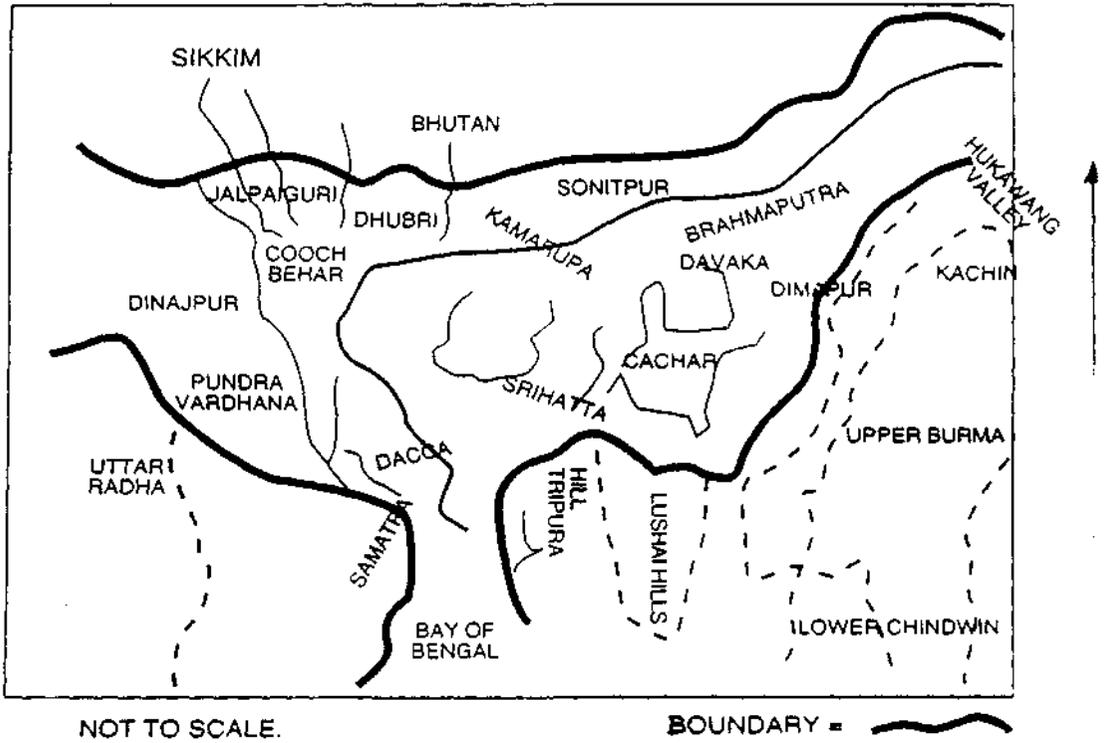
*Vamsavali*= *Genealogy*.

*Varna* = Caste

*Zillah/Zellah*= Administrative unit of the Koch kingdom.

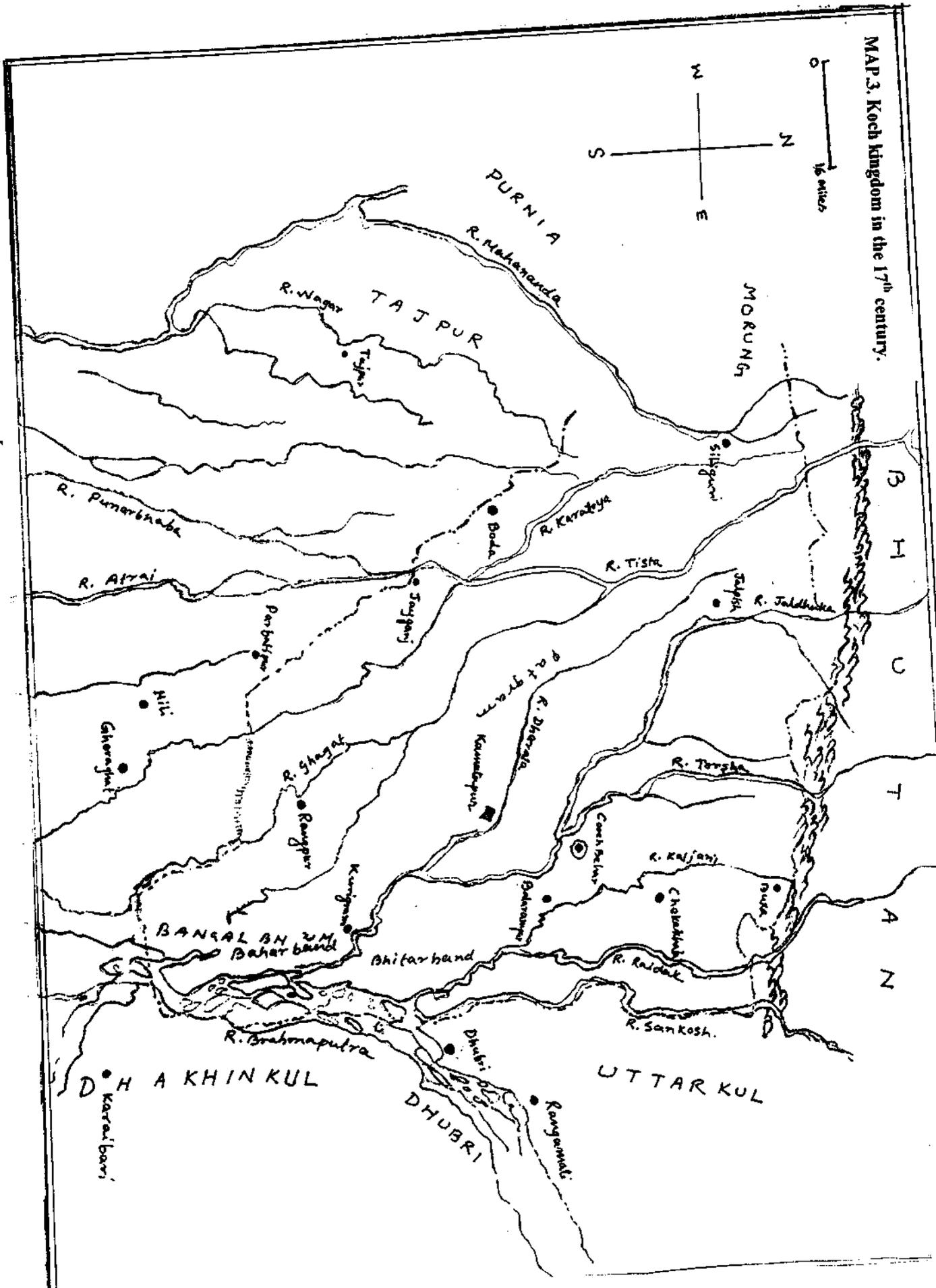
# Maps

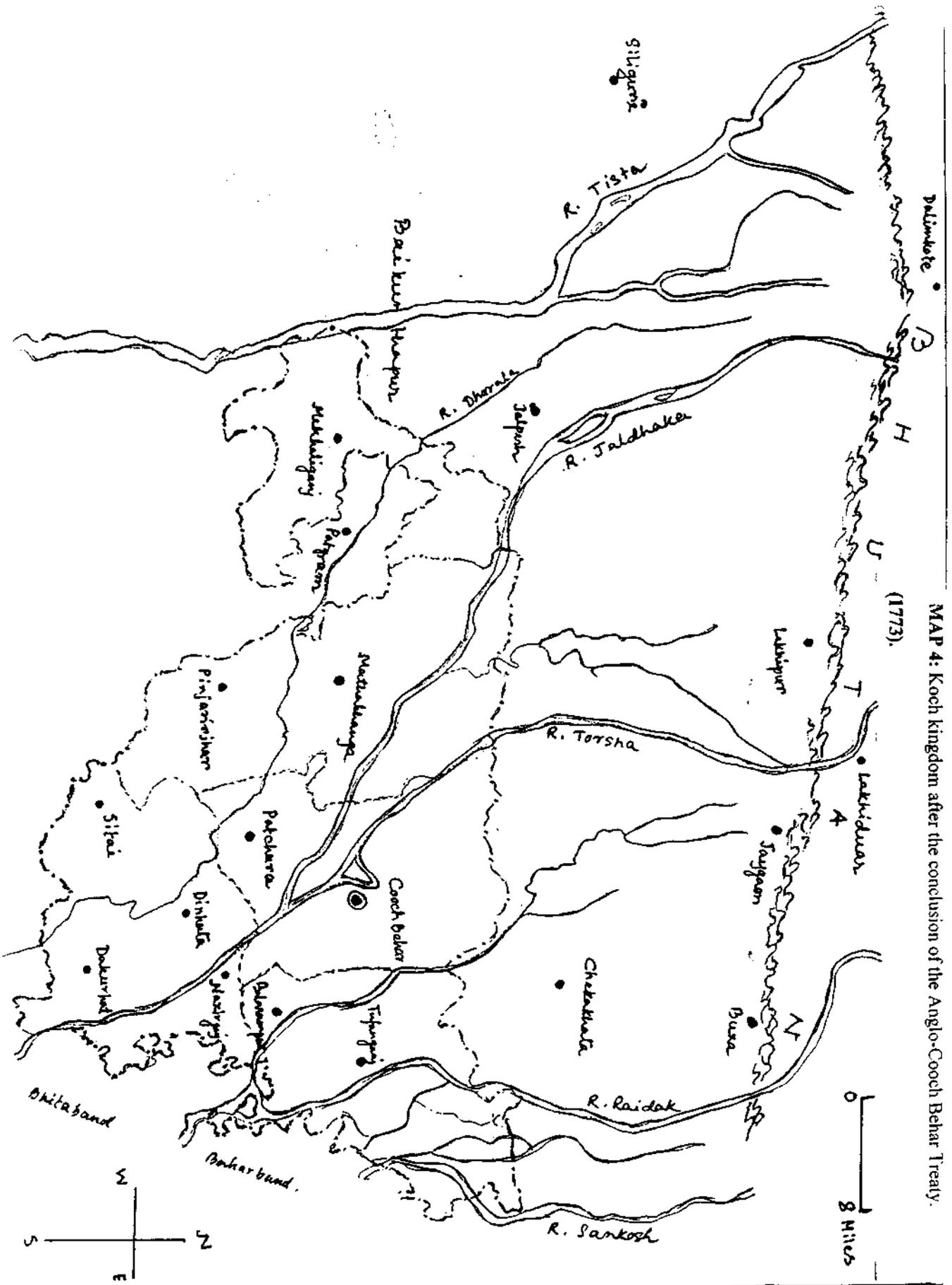
**MAP.1. Kamrupa under Vaskar Varaman.(7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.)**





MAP 3. Koch kingdom in the 17th century.





Dalimkote •

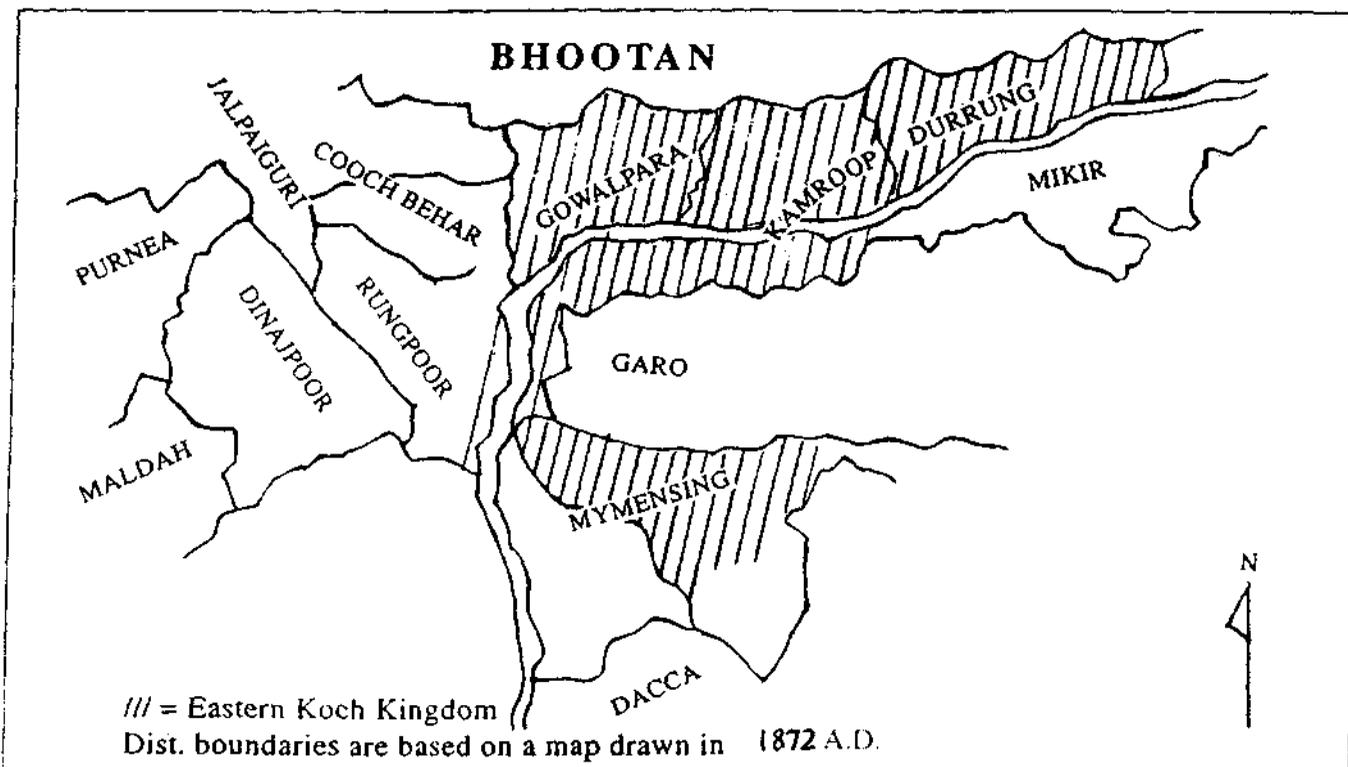
MAP 4: Koch kingdom after the conclusion of the Anglo-Cooch Behar Treaty.

H U (1773)

8 Miles

N  
S  
E  
W

MAP .5. The Eastern Koch Kingdom(late 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries).



# **Illustrations**

Plate: 1 A page of the manuscript of the Markandeya Purana .

শেস্তানবরাজাদেশিকিতেন	আগরাধিগায়াজগত্য়াধকরিন	বাগনবেশ্যমানেমকীয়দানন	বাসস্তানদিনভাধেপ্রতিপ্রোভন
মণ্ডল্যামমমদুতথায়নিরম	করিতেনমদারাজধরু কমানন	প্রনদেগেবজামদারজাকোলরুদ	গগরুদম্বনবাজধরু কপ্রভবে
কতপ্রমদারাজগধকবভিন	কনকপ্রগাধমদানিমধদন	বদীপ্রগমনচেষ্টাকতনকবে	নেচেষ্টারাজনদেউকগাধভবে
ধনরহজাতকনিবাজকরিনদ	ধনধন্যমদকজাধজেরধব	নবধিগনিবানীরকাকগাধুত	নাচেষ্টকারেমাঅনিচমকিত
ধনরহজাতকনিবাজকরিনদ	যথাযথনভূদননেঅরিভে	ইহিমানতগগাধগনাগনকবি	গীতপ্রাণিরনবাজককীয়গধি
ধনরহজাতকনিবাজকরিনদ	ধনধন্যমদকজাধজেরধব	ঐবক্রিতোকমম৩নআকিঞ্চন	দেখাধেঅগিধনকবিদবগন
ধনরহজাতকনিবাজকরিনদ	যথাযথনভূদননেঅরিভে	গদ্যবআঢ়েগমা কথয়তপ্রাণ	যপ্রাণিগিমহিউধকেনবনাম
ধনরহজাতকনিবাজকরিনদ	আনধিধনরহজাতকরিক	গাকধনইঐনিধববৈধগবিনান	গমাগনচেনপ্রাণিবনমতিধনে

PLATE: 3.1.:KAMTAPUR FORT.

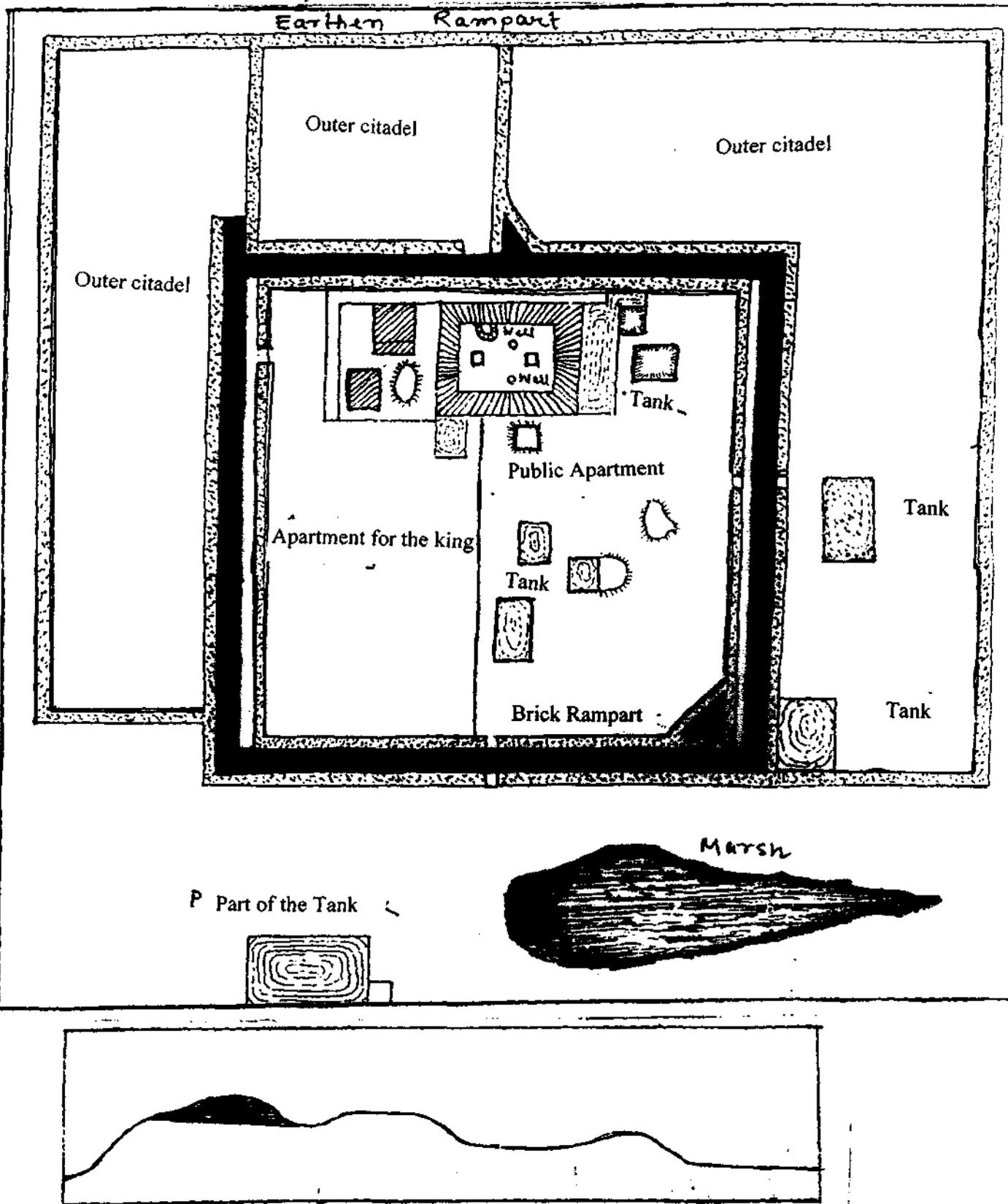
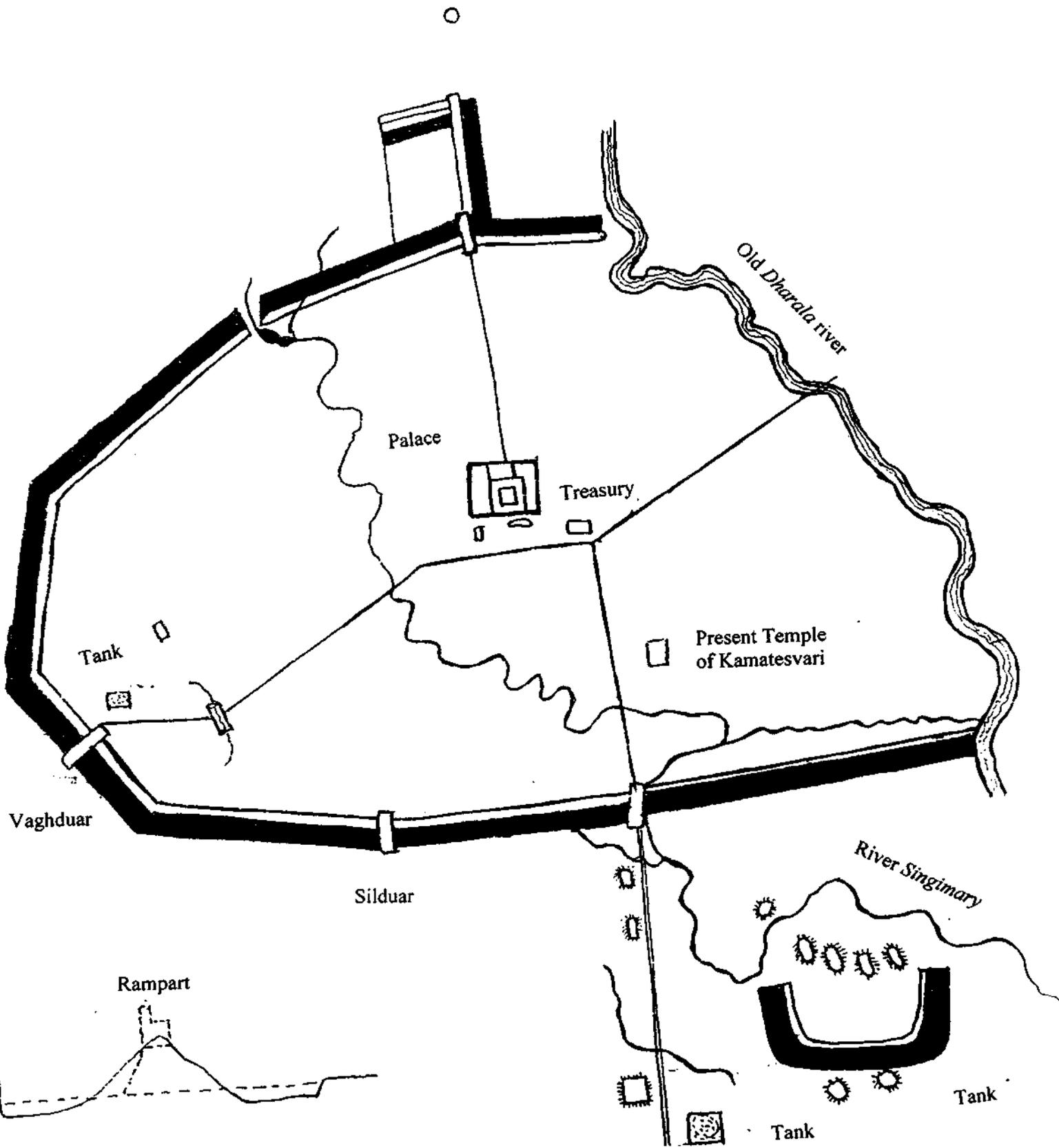


PLATE:3.2.:KAMATAPUR.



**PLATE: 3.3.**

**PRESENT RUINS OF THE RAJPAT ,GOSANIMARI, COOCH BEHAR.**



**A. Distance view of the Rajpat.**



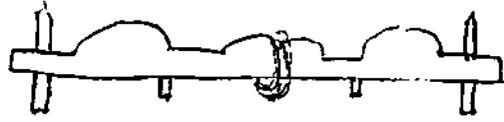
**B. Well, excavated in the Rajpat.**



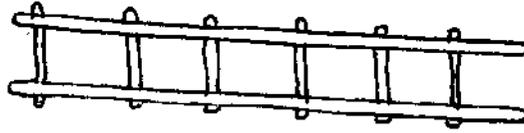
**C. One of the gates of the fort.**

PLATE: 5.1.

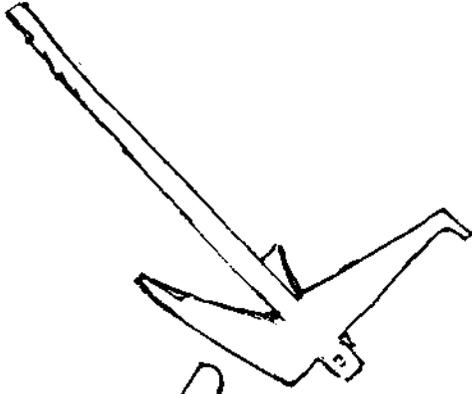
TRADITIONAL AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS.



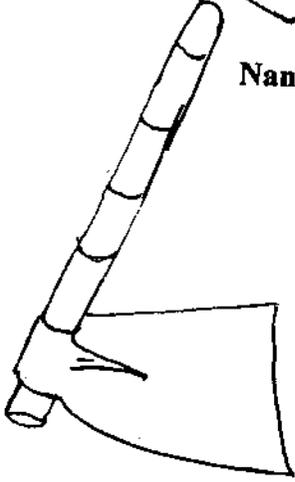
Dzoal = Yoke .



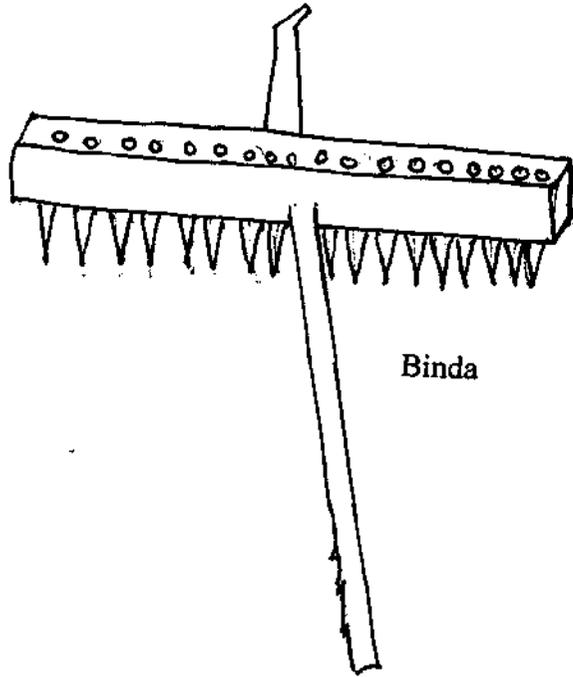
Mai ,ladder for harrowing.



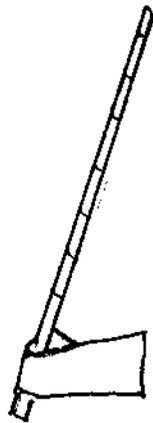
Nangal/Hal =Plough.



Kodal = Hoe /Spade

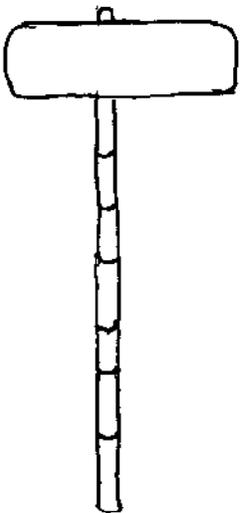


Binda



Kurhal=Axe

Ghasua Dao = Sickle for cutting jute



s = Club to break the clods after ploughing .



Katchi = Sickle

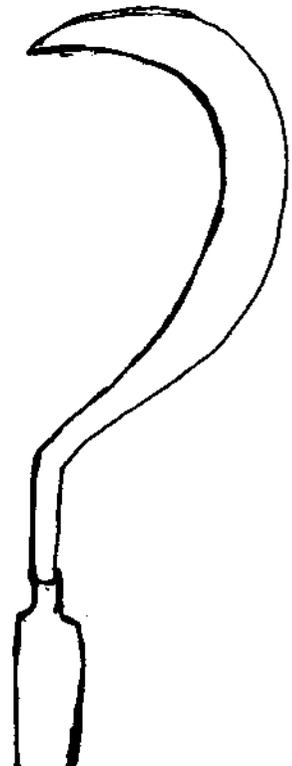
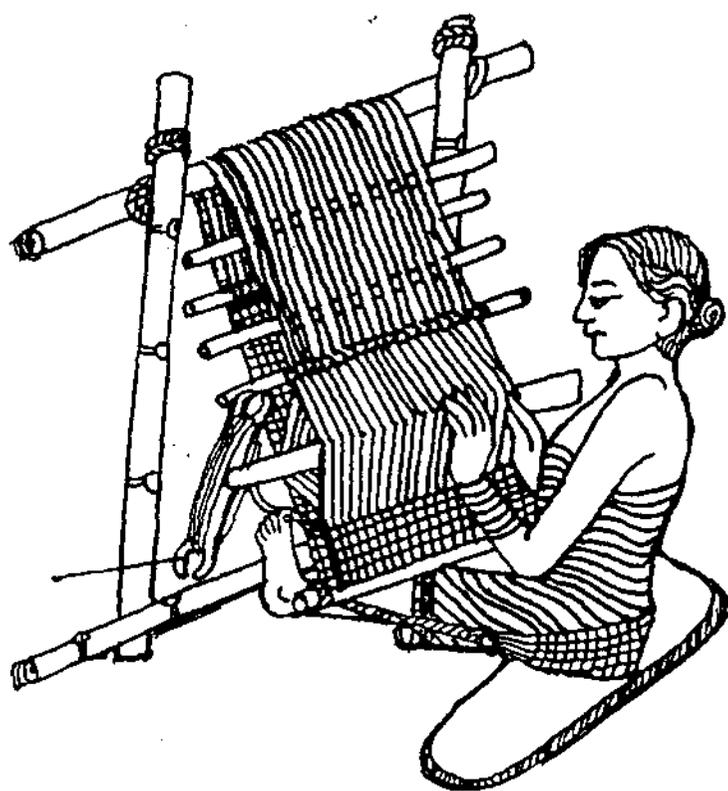
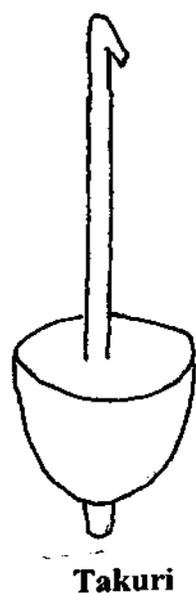
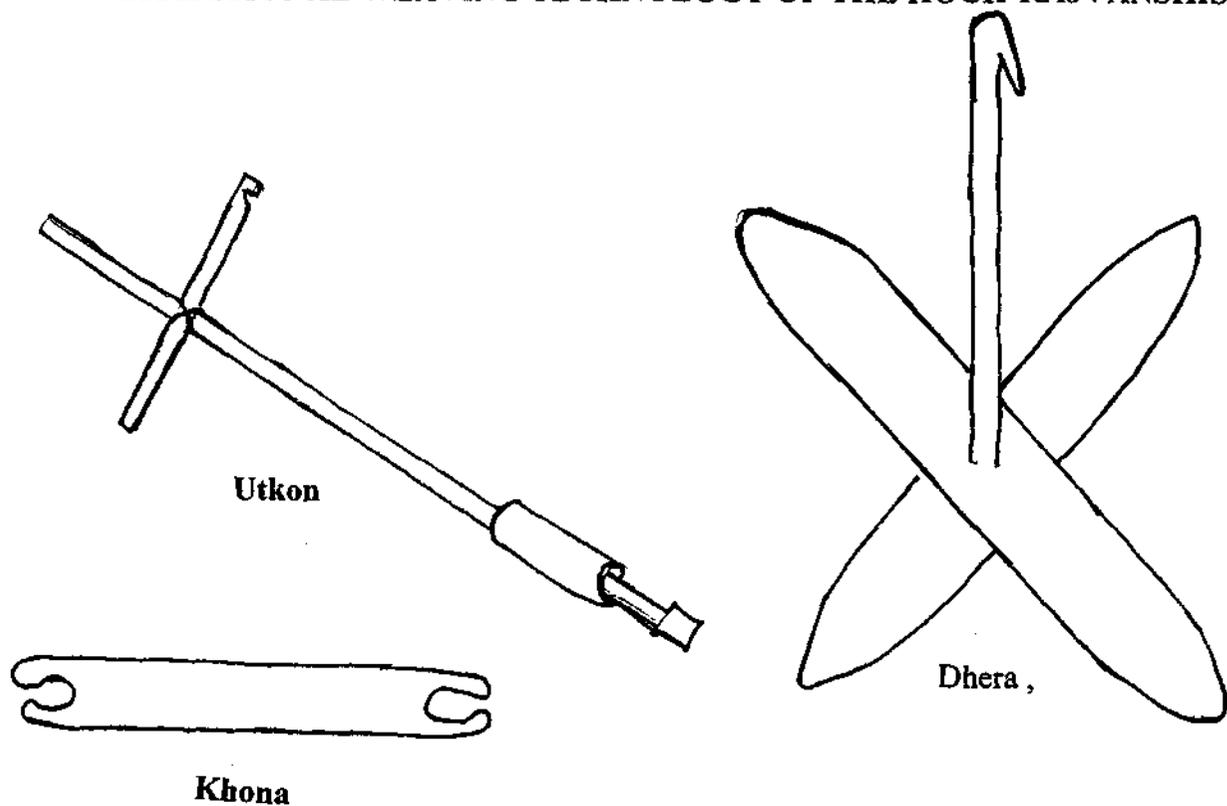


PLATE: 5.2.

TRADITIONAL WEAVING TECHNOLOGY OF THE KOCH-RAJVANSHIS.

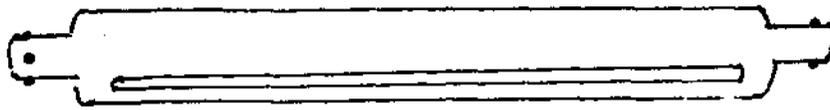


A Koch woman weaving a *dhokra* .

Gulo

PLATE: 5.3.

TRADITIONAL WEAVING IMPLEMENTS (SANCHLAD) OF THE MECHEs .



Shal Gandai



Gandai



Ganshi (of string)



Ganshi (of thread)

Putul

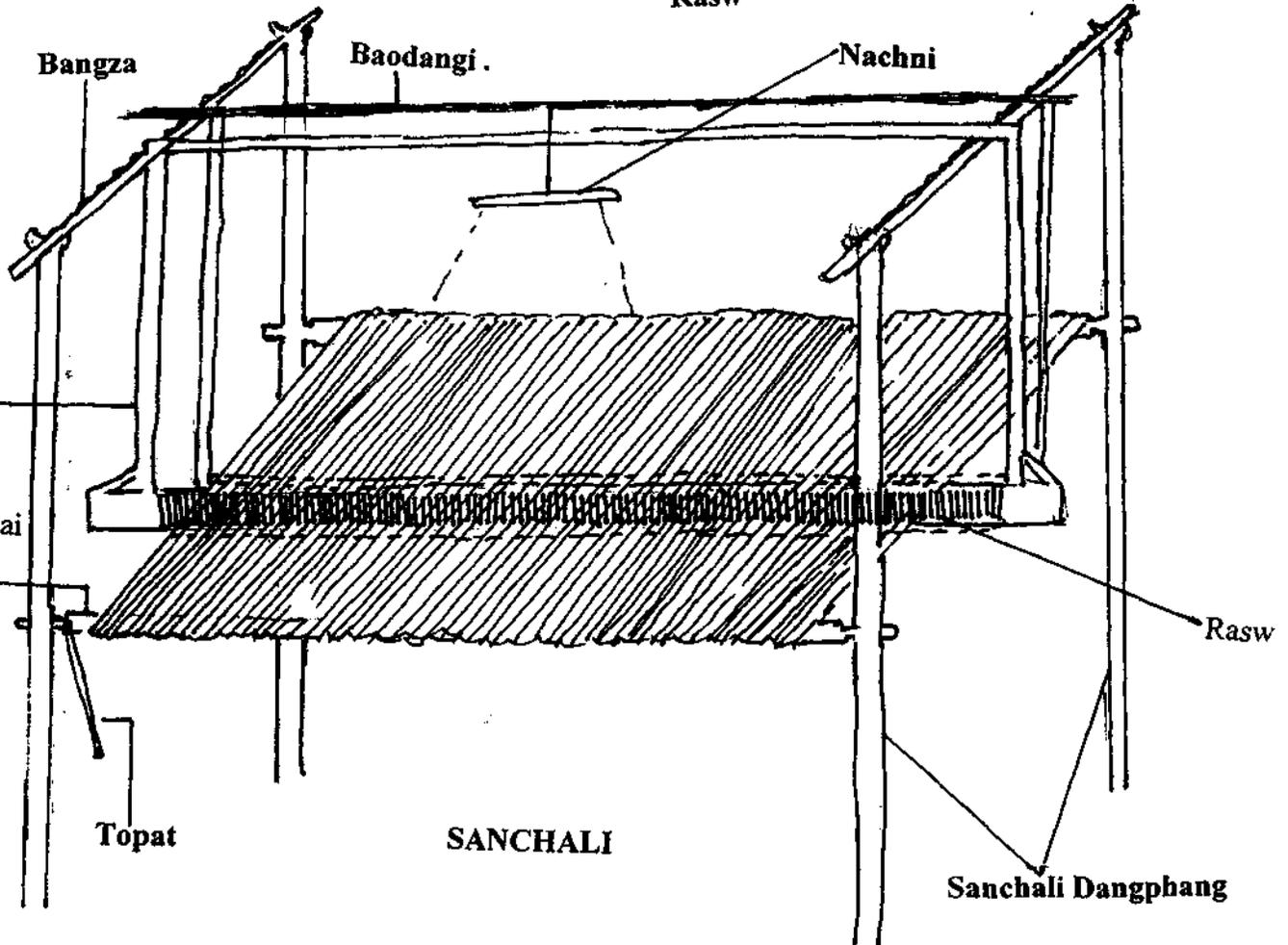


Mushra

Maku



Rasw



Bangza

Baodangi .

Nachni

Shal Belap

Shal Gandai

Rasw

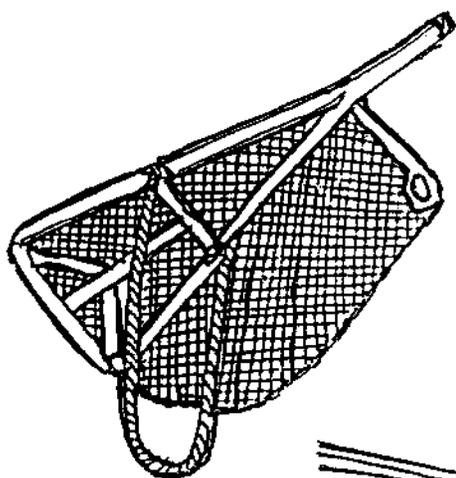
Topat

SANCHALI

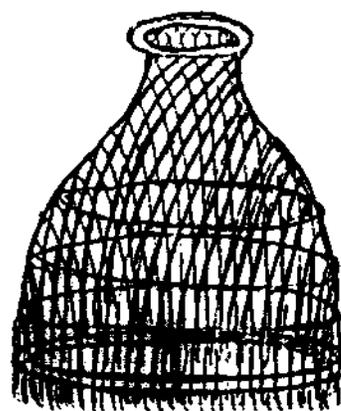
Sanchali Dangphang

PLATE: 5.4.

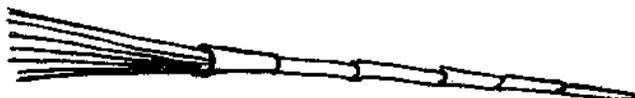
FISHING IMPLEMENTS OF THE TRIBES



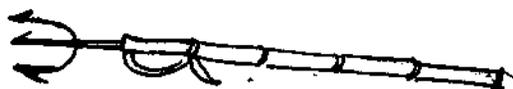
Jakai



Dzaka



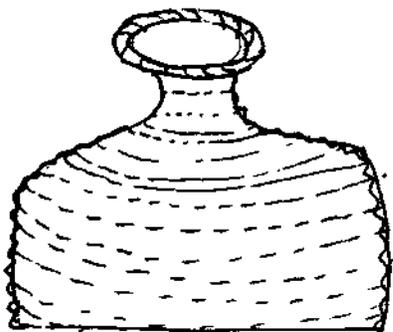
Kocha



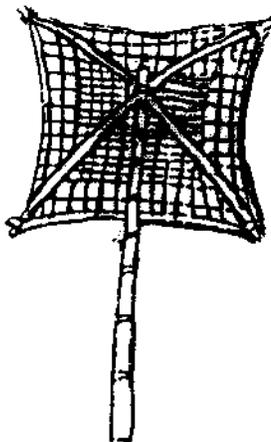
Kata



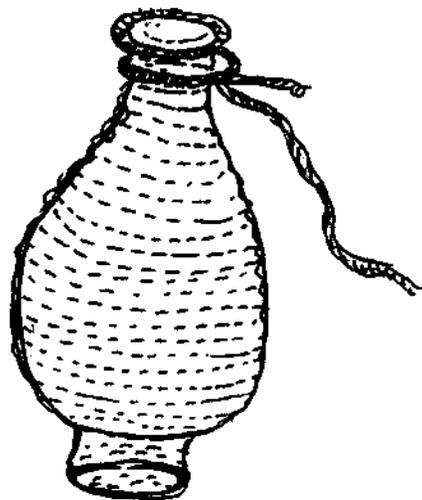
Dao



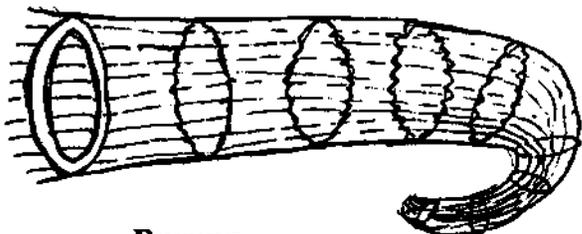
Polo



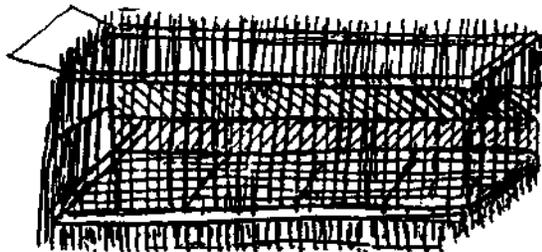
Dzaki Dzal



Khaloi



Burung



Darki

PLATE: 5.5.

KOCH COINS (NARAYANI TANKA)



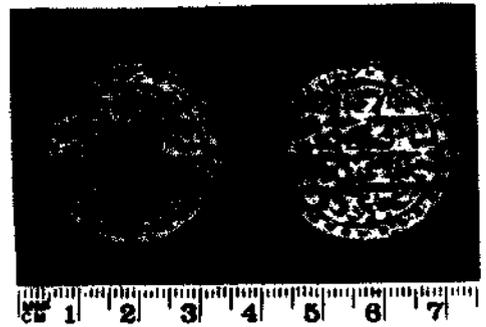
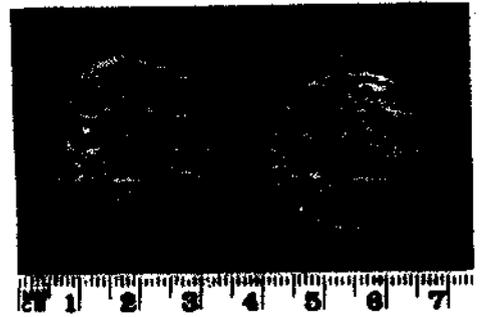
A. Coin of Naranarayan .



B. Coin of Lakshmi Narayan .



C. Raghudeva's Coin (two sizes)



D. Coins of Bira Narayan.



E. Half-rupee Coin of Prana Narayan.



F. Coin of Devendra Narayan.



Deva Taka of Bhutan.

PLATE: 6.1.  
ROYAL INSIGNIAS.



A. Jata dharmata stajaya, (where there is virtue there is victory).



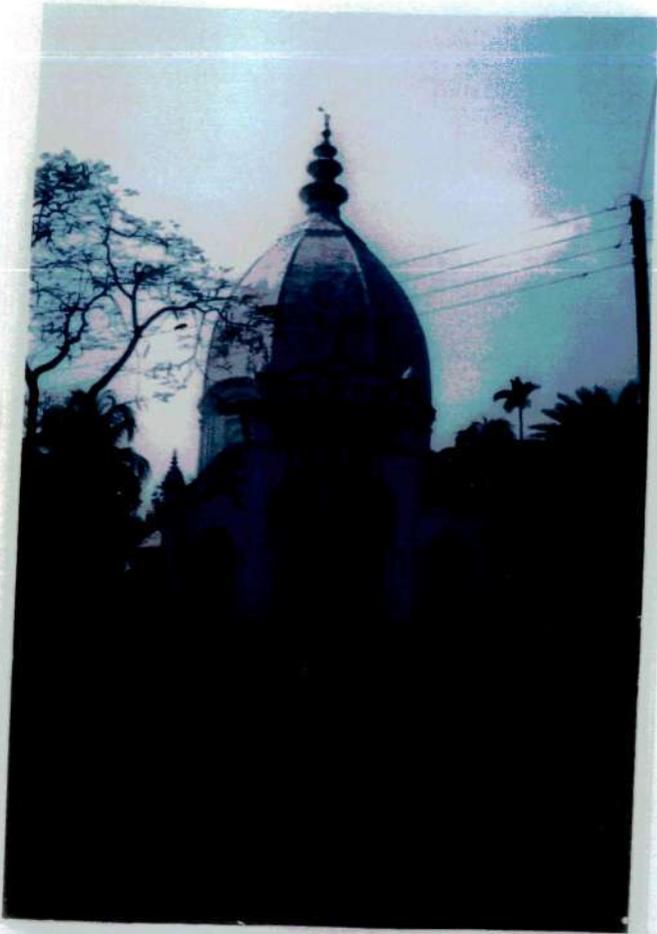
C. Gate of the Palace.

B. Present Royal Palace of Cooch Behar.

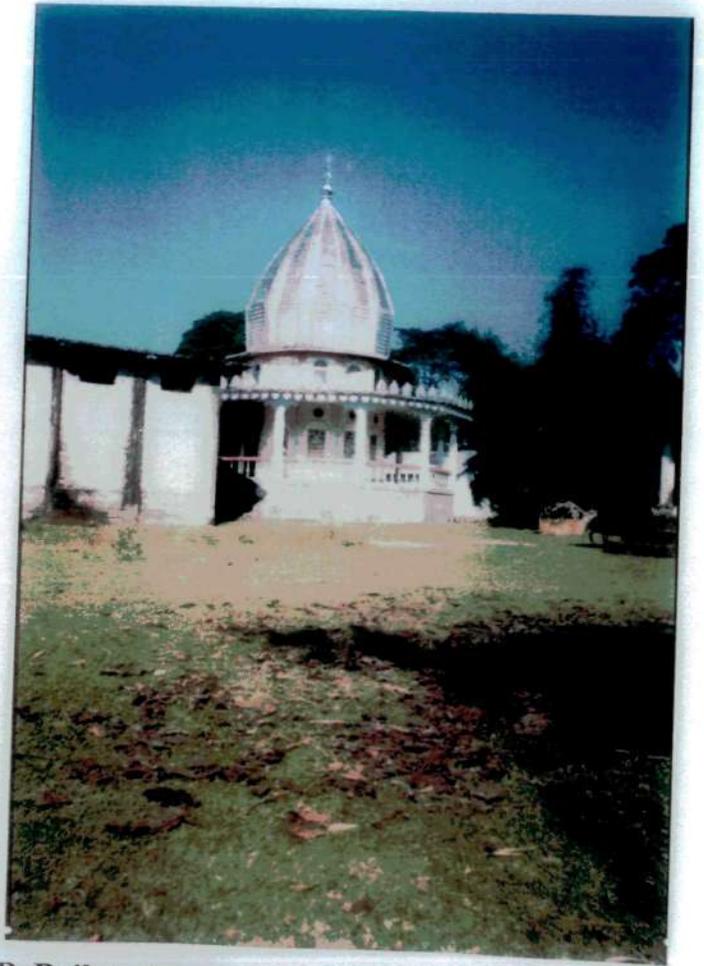


PLATE: 7.1.

IMPORTANT SATRAS OF THE KOCH KINGDOM



A. Madhupur Satra, Madhupur, Cooch Behar.



B. Baikunthapur Satra, Baikunthapur, Cooch Behar.



C. The Simhasan of Haripur Satra, Tufanganj, Cooch Behar.

SAKTI TEMPLES AND DEITIES .



A. Kamakshya Temple, Gauhati.



B. Kamateswari Temple Inscription.

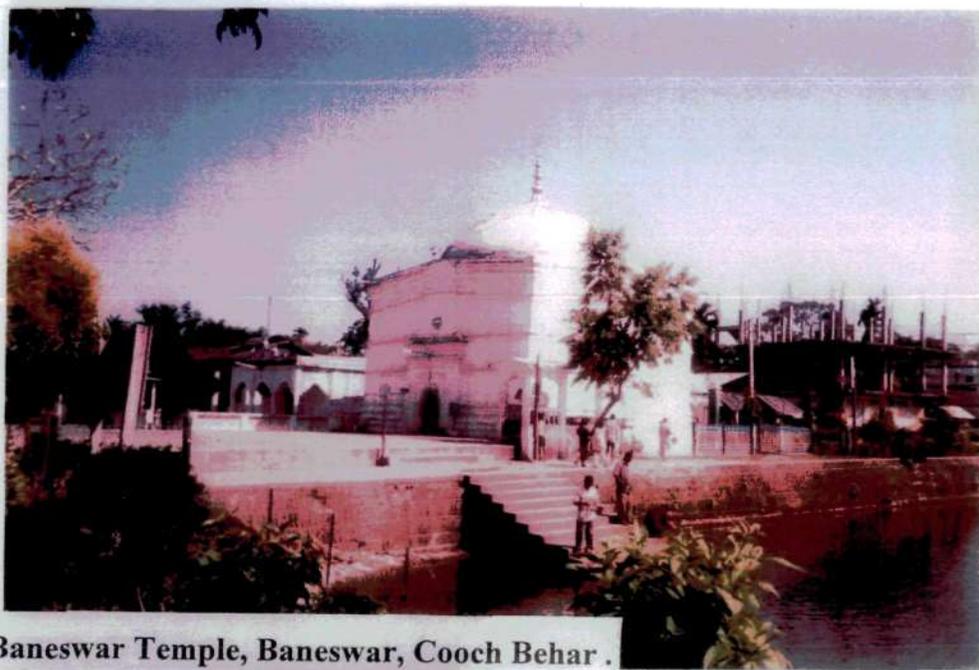
C. Kamateswari Temple, Gossanimari, Cooch Behar.



D. Image of the Devi  
(Devibari ,Cooch Behar).

**PLATE: 7.3.**

**SHIVA TEMPLES OF THE KOCH KINGDOM.**



**A. Baneswar Temple, Baneswar, Cooch Behar .**

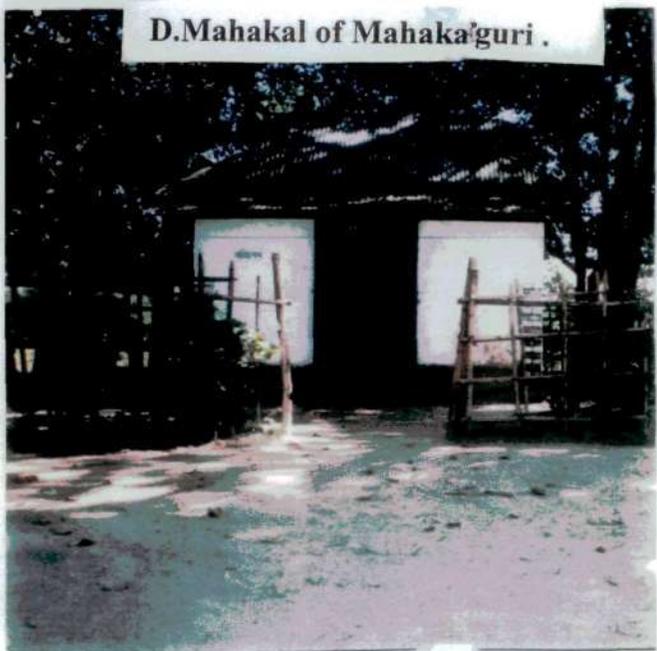


**B. Inside of the Bara Mahadeva Temple, Barakodali, Cooch Behar.**

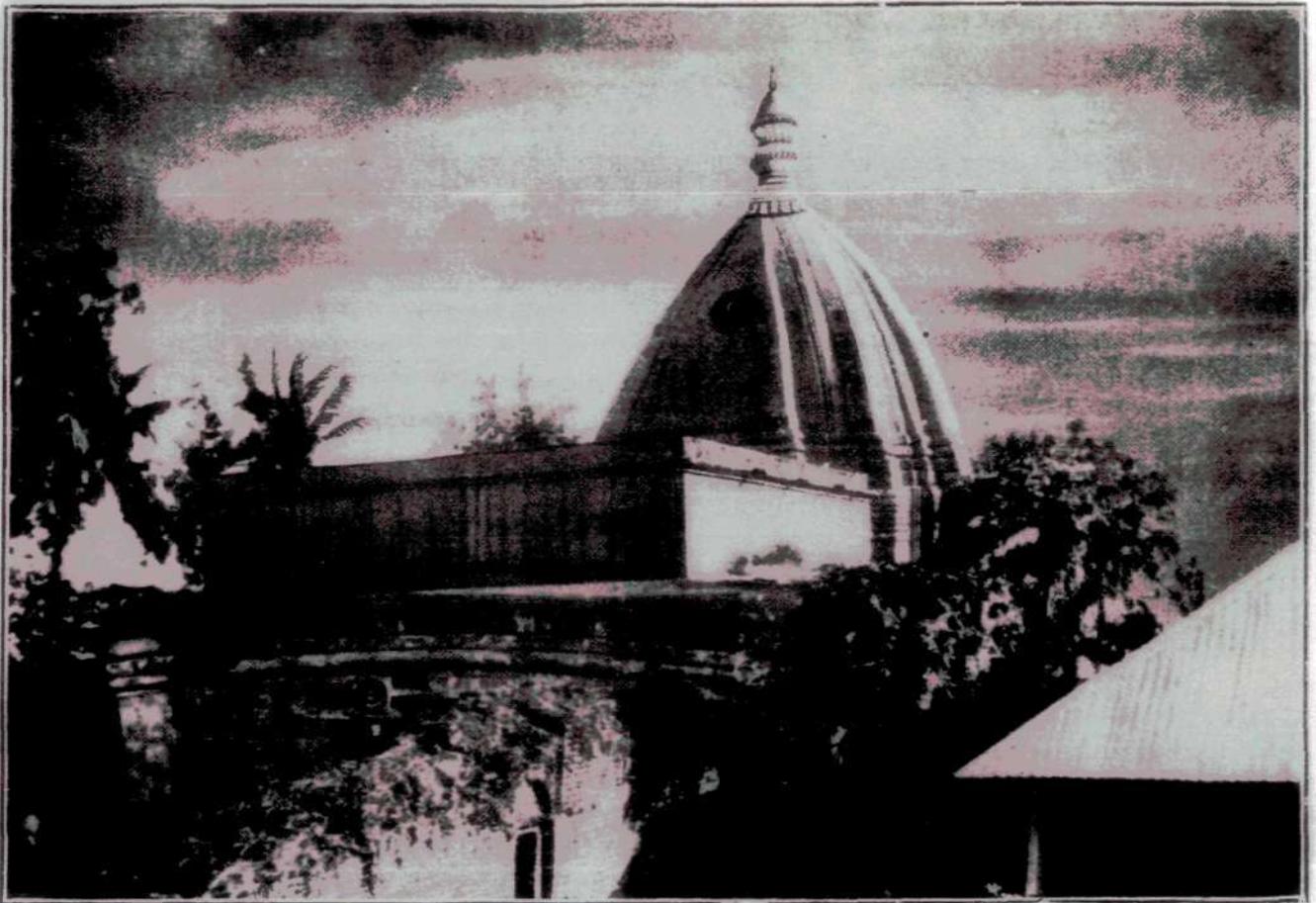
**C. Chhota Mahadeva ,Nakkatigachh ,Cooch Behar .**



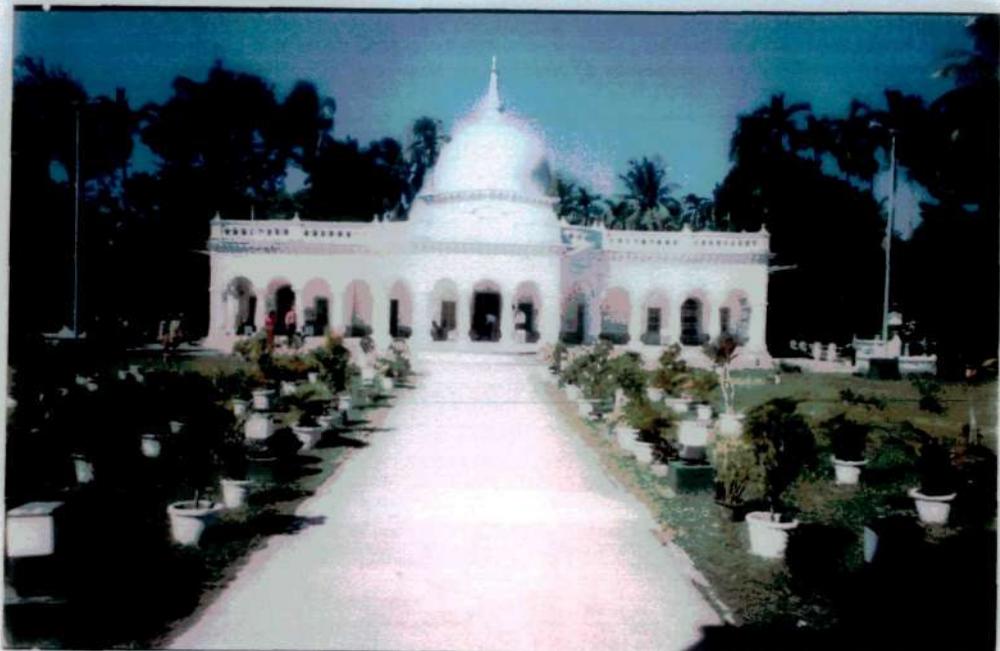
**D.Mahakal of Mahaka'guri .**



**PLATE: 7.4.**  
**VISHNU TEMPLES OF THE KOCH KINGDOM.**



**A.Hayagriva Madhava Temple, Hajo.**

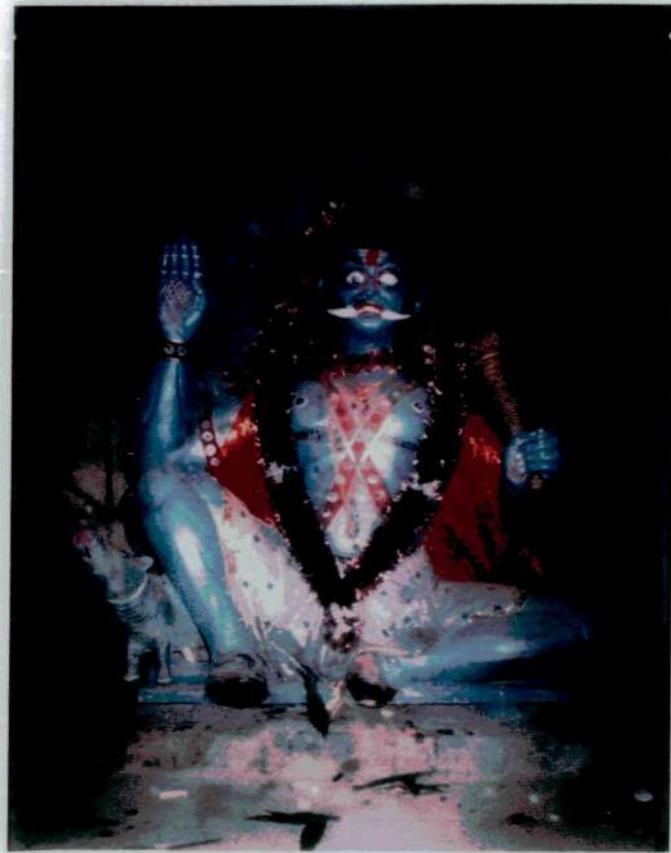


**B.Madan Mahon(Cooch Behar)**

FOLK DEITIES OF THE TISTA-BRHAMAPUTRA VALLEY .



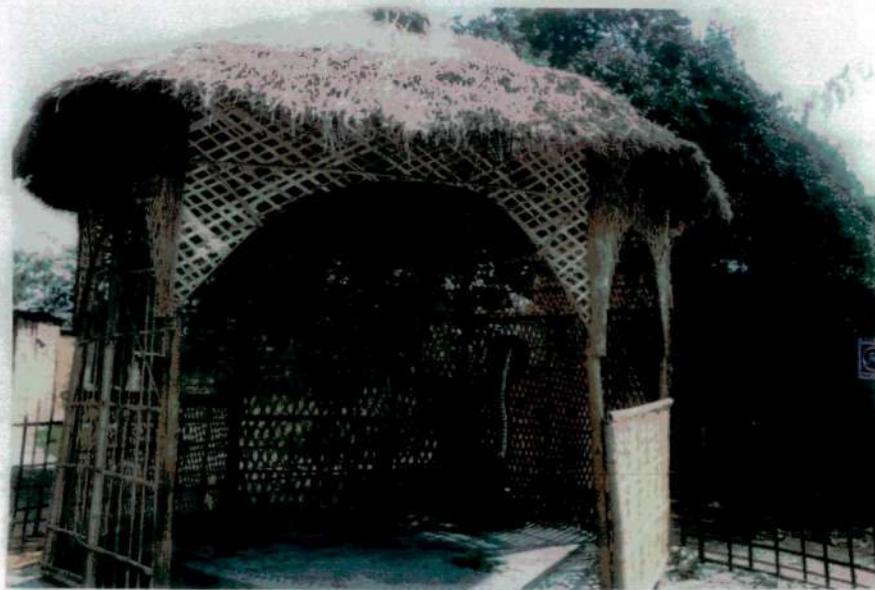
A.Bhandani .



B.MasanDeo.



C. Symbol of Bathou.(of the Meches ).



D. Bishahari (at the bank of the Torsha, Cooch Behar).