

STUDY OF
SOME ASPECTS OF THE
HISTORY OF KĀMATA-KOCH BIHAR

THESIS

SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY IN ARTS OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF NORTH BENGAL

1985

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P R E F A C E

The present work has been taken up as my thesis for the Ph.D. degree of the University of North Bengal. The idea of doing a work on this topic first occurred to me in 1976 when I had an opportunity of visiting the ruined city of Kāmatāpura, the famed Capital of the Kāmatā-Koch Bihar Kingdom on a study tour as a post-graduate student of North Bengal University. I must admit that I have been fortunate enough to work under the encouragement and guidance of Dr. Pranab Kumar Bhattacharyya, Jadunath Sarkar Professor, Deptt. of History, North Bengal University.

I am also deeply obliged to a large number of Scholars and Historians of Bengal and Assam including the late Dr. D.C. Sircar, Formerly Carmichael Professor, Calcutta University, Dr. Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, Dr. Kalyan Kumar Ganguly, Dr. Amalendu De, Formerly General Secretary, Asiatic Society, Calcutta, Dr. Maheswar Neog, Ex-Jawaharlal Nehru Professor, Gauhati University, for their valuable suggestions and help which I received on many occasions.

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P.S. Very recently Dr. Maheswar Neog has published a book from Delhi on Early History of the Vaishnava Faith and Movement in Assam, which, however, could not be incorporated in my bibliography, but I came to know about the salient features of the book relevant to my work at the time of my last meeting with Dr. Neog at his Gauhati residence.

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ABBREVIATION

I.H.Q.	Indian Historical Quaterly
J.A.R.S.	Journal of the Assam Research Society
J.A.S.B.	Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal
J.N.S.I.	Journal of the Numismatic Society of India.
O.D.B.L.	Origin and Development of Bengal Language.

System of Transliteration

आ = ā ई = ī ऊ = ū ऋ = ṛ

ए = e, ओ = o

च = ca, छ = cha,

ज = j ट = ta ठ = tha ड = da

ढ = dha ण = na, ब = ba,

य = ya व = va ष = sha

श = śa Visarga = h

anusvāra = m

An exception has been made in respect of Koch Bihar
(instead of Koca Vihāra). The usual spellings are used for
modern names and place names.

INTRODUCTION

The western part of the Brahmaputra valley in former times was included in the ancient kingdom of Kāmarūpa and from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries A.D. the whole tract upto the Karatoya¹ seems still, as a rule, to have formed a single kingdom, but the name had been changed from Kāmarūpa to Kāmata.² The Muhammedan historians, as observed by Gait,³ sometimes speak as if the terms Kāmarūpa and Kāmata were synonymous and the same country and sometimes as two different territories.⁴ The connected account of the Kāmata-Koch territory may, however, be obtained since the time of the destruction of the Khyan (Khen) dynasty by Hussain Shāh, ruler of Gauḍa, who claimed himself as 'Conqueror of Kāmaru, Kāmata, Jājnagar and Odīśā' on his coins issued in 899, 915 and 919 Hijri (corresponding to 1493, 1509 and 1513 A.D.)⁵ and the establishment of a new dynasty at Kāmata-pura under Viśvasiṃha, a Hinduised Koch Chieftain shortly afterwards (c 1530 A.D.)⁶. The dynasty was known as Nārāyaṇī following assumption of the title Nārāyaṇa by the rulers since the time of Naranārāyaṇa, the son and successor of Viśvasiṃha. Naranārāyaṇa who was credited to have kept in tact the kingdom of his father, is said to have made Raghudeva, his nephew the governor of a portion of his kingdom extending from the Saṅkoṣa to the Baḍnadi in 1581. Raghudeva assumed the title Kāmarūpesvara⁷

in 1583 A.D. during the reign of Naranārāyaṇa, but after his death he (Raghudeva) declared independence and struck coins in 1510 Śaka i.e. 1588 A.D.⁸ The successors of Naranārāyaṇa, however, (i.e. the main line) to the western part of the undivided Kāmata Kingdom with the Saṅkoṣa as its eastern boundary and Koch Bihar as its nucleus region. We have confined our study to the history of the dynasty established by Viśvasimha whose successors were known as Nārāyaṇī kings and who continued to rule to the east of the Saṅkoṣa river till the conclusion of the Anglo-Koch Treaty in 1773 A.D. Since then the rulers of Koch Bihar attained the status of native rulers of British India.

The Koch territories to the west of the Saṅkoṣa river appears to much bigger in area than the native state of Koch Bihar⁹ (i.e. Cooch Behar) which lies between 25°57'40" and 26°32'20" N and 89°47'40" and 89°54'35" E.

The extension of the Kingdom of Naranārāyaṇa, as suggested by H.N.Chowdhury¹⁰ on basis of the Vaiśāvalī seems to have been exaggerated. Most of the conquests attributed to Naranārāyaṇa, however, were no better than plundering raids. The testimony of Abul Fazl, as also held by S.N.Bhattacharyya, is conclusive in respect of the territorial limits of Koch Bihar 'on the east is the river Brahmaputra, on the north is lower Tibet and Assam, on the south is Ghoraghat and on the west is Tirhut.'¹¹ The boundaries of Koch Bihar as given in the Baharistān

generally tally with that derived from the Akbarnāmah. Jaipur (Joycong of Renell's Map No.5; about 25 miles north of the new town of Koch Bihar, was possibly the north-eastern frontier fort of Koch Bihar at this time.¹² Stephen Casella (1626-27) mentions 'Reinate' (Rāngānāti Joygaon, in western Duar 20 miles north-west of the modern town of Alipurduar) was the northernmost Limit of the Koch territory during Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa's time. On the south the regions of Bhitaband and Bahirband which were included in the Koch Kingdom under Naranārāyaṇa were seized by the Mughals in the initial stage¹³ and Sarkag Chhoraghat became an Imperial frontier post. To the east the Sankosa was the traditional frontier of the Koch Kingdom. The Baharistan¹⁴ refers to the Khontaghat paraganah as included in Parīksitnārāyaṇa's realm, whereas the Fathiyā¹⁵ makes Khontaghat as the eastern boundary of Koch Bihar. On the west the boundary does not appear to be well marked. Abul Fasl rather vaguely says that Firhut was the western limit. From the Fathiyā¹⁶ we learn that Patganw (Patgong, about 20 miles to the west of the New town of Koch Bihar vide Renell's Map No.5) was the western frontier of king Prānanārāyaṇa's domain.

It is said that physiography moulds the geographic base for human activities and settlements. The geographic personality of a region is erected over the base. From a geographical point of view the kingdom of Kāmatā may be divided into two sharply defined Zones - the Brahmaputra valley, and the territory lying to the west of it and reaching upto the Karatoya. The general topography and

physical features of the former region which may be said to begin east of the confluence of the Sankosa with the Brahmaputra which became the kingdom of Kamarūpesvara Raghudevanārāyaṇa since 1510 Śaka as noticed earlier. It is almost of triangular shape, with territories centering round Sadiyā as the apex, and those bordering on the Gāro and the Khāsīā Hills on the south and the South-west as the base. Regarding the physical features of this region, it presents 'the peculiarity of a perfect plain, studded with numerous clumps of hills rising abruptly from the general level, and surrounded by lofty mountains, and intersected in all possible directions by innumerable streams and rivulets, which, issuing from the border mountains at length empty themselves into the great channel of the Brahmaputra'. The lands having the alluvial deposits of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries are very extensive and of great fertility and elevation. The most typical of the fertile alluvial plains is the vast Kajali plain (Nowgong) which stretches for a distance of 42 kos east to west, according to the author of the Fathiyya¹⁷ which formed the territory of a powerful Bhuyān chief in whose family Śāṅkaradeva, the Vaiṣṇava reformer was born. Other alluvial plains are on the banks of the Badnādī and the Manās and these appear to have been covered with extensive jungles during the Mughal periods.

The Manās rises in the Bhutan hills and after a winding course falls into the Brahmaputra. Jagighopa which stands near the confluence of the two streams, has always been

a place of great strategic importance. Further east of the Manās is the Bādnāī, which is famous in Persian and Assamese chronicles as making the eastern boundary of Kāmarūpa kingdom and afterwards of Mughal Kāmarūpa, and the western frontier of the Ahom State.

The territory lying to the west of the Sankosa, included the native state of Koch Bihar (or Cooch Behar), and which became the kingdom of the Nārāyaṇī kings (main line) since the time of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa, consists of a large well-cultivated plain of oblong shape, intersected by numerous streams. It stretches north and south, and gradually narrows down till it attains its smallest breadth between the South-west and the South-east. Its most striking feature is the general absence of hills and rising grounds, and the consequent dead level of the land. The entire tract is rather low and liable to inundation, to guard against which, extensive barriers, termed as āls, were raised in Mughal times. The Alamgirnāmah speaks of dense bamboo groves abounding in Koch Bihar very little of them being now seen except in the north-east.^{17a}

The river system of this area is an important study and besides the contemporary accounts of the Mughal period, the map left by the Dutch Governor Van den Broucke in 1660, Rennell's Bengal Atlas and the more recent maps supply us with interesting information.

In the tract west of the great basin of the

Brahmaputra the natural drainage is formed north-west to south-east. Among the prominent rivers Karatoyā, as we have already noticed, formed the westernmost boundary of Prāgjyotisa-Kāmarūpa. It is shown in Van Den Broecke's map of Bengal as flowing into the Ganges. This must have been the course of the river in Mīrzā Nathan's time. But that course has undergone a great change. Before the great flood of 1737 it discharged the water of the Trisrotā (i.e. Tista) into the Ātreylī and then into the Ganges. But when after the flood the main stream of the Tista changed its course and broke away to the east, the Karatoyā became a stream of minor importance.¹⁸

Of the other rivers mentioned in the Alamgirnamah one appears to be, as suggested by S.N. Bhattacharyya¹⁹, the Dharlā (or Durlāh or Dhorlā), which rises in the Bhutan hills and flows through Pagong following South-easterly direction and ultimately empties into the Brahmaputra, skirting the Bhitāband parganāh in the west. It played a significant part in pre-Mughal and in Mughal times. Kāmatāpura²⁰, the famed capital of the Koch rulers; sometimes identified with Kāmarūpanagara the capital of the Pāla rulers of Kāmarūpa,²¹ stood on its west bank and its extensive ruins were observed by Hamilton in 1809. The places like Megul Hāt etc. on its bank seems to suggest that the river figured prominently also in Mughal days.

The river Sankosa (i.e. Sankosh) finds mention

in the Persian and Koch Chronicles as well as in the Assamese Burañjis. It marked the physical boundary between the State of Koch Bihar and its offshoot Kāmarūpa as also perhaps the cultural barrier between Bengal and the north-east frontier tract.²² The course of the Sankosa as given in Rennel's Atlas was not very different from what we get from Mirsa Nathan's work. It rises from the Bhutan hills flows in a southward direction forming the eastern boundary of the Koch realm and joins the Brahmaputra along the eastern border of Bhitāband. It was a stream of considerable length and volume during the Mughal Conquest of Kāmarūpa and the rebels used to take asylum in Koch Bihar after crossing the river.²³

The ^{Soil} Land of the north-east frontier region is greatly varied in character. The most of the territory to the west of the Sankosa consists of a mixed free soil and is composed of light friable loam, superimposed on a deep bed of pure sand. It is very fertile and the Alamgirnāmah and the Fathiyys both testify to the abundance and productivity of Koch Bihar state of the time. Stephen Cacella, the Jesuit traveller, who visited the Koch Capital in 1626-27 speaks about the density of population and abundance of the necessaries of life there.

The rainfall in this region being quite heavy and well-distributed, the cultivator hardly needs artificial irrigation for his crop. Occasionally during the tobacco

season in winter the accumulated water are lifted by dms for irrigating tobacco-fields. The Persian Chroniclers speak of the salubrity and mildness of the climate of Koch Bihar in unmistakable terms, this have nothing but aversion and fear for the general unhealthy air of Assam.²⁴

These are the geographical bases of the Kāmata-Koch territory with which we are concerned. The present work will primarily be a study of socio-economic, religious and administrative history of the region. Though a number of contributions have been made by the scholars to ~~the~~ some isolated problems of the region, particularly of the post-British period, very little work has so far been attempted to the period under our investigation. Among some pioneer works mention may be made here of Edward Gait's A History of Assam, Harendranarayan Chowdhury's The Koch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement, Khan Chowdhury Amanatulla Ahmed's Koch Biharar Itihasa (Bengali) [Eng. Tr. as A History of Koch Behar by S.C.Ghosal] and S.N.Bhattacharyya's A History of Mughal North-Eastern Frontier Policy.

The accounts of Koch Bihar from the time of its contact with the English starting from the reign of Dhairvendranarayana onwards are well-documented, but its history prior to that date is to be gleaned ^{from} various sources. Again, these sources often conflict among themselves and are subject to

different interpretations. But inspite of these difficulties they supply us with sufficient information which help us to reconstruct the history of the region. Among these sources, the following may be mentioned : Kālikā-Purāna, Yoginī-Tantra, different Parvas of the Mahābhārata and Purānas written by the Court poets and others; various Vaṁśāvalis like Rājavāṁśāvali, Bṛhat Rājavāṁśāvali, Samdranārāyaṇa's Vāṁśāvali (or Darrang-Rāja Vāṁśāvali), Kāmarūpa-Vāṁśāvali, Gandharvanārāyaṇa's Vāṁśāvali etc.; Burāṇis like Assam Burāṇi, Ahon Burāṇi, Kāmarūpar Burāṇi, Doodhai Assam Burāṇi etc.; religious treatises like Guru Carita, Śrī Śrī Deva Dāmodara Carita, Mahāpuruṣa Śrī Śaṅkaradeva āru Śrī Nādhavadeva Carita, Gurullā, Bardova Guru Carita etc.

Besides the indigenous literary sources, the accounts left by the Muslim Chroniclers and other travellers are no less important. Among these a few works may be noted here: Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri, Tuzuk-i-Jahāngiri, Mīrṣā Nathan's Bahāristān-i-Ghaybī, Ain-i-Akbari, Akbarnāma, Pādīshāhnāmah Fathiyya-i-'ibriyya, Riyāṣ-us-Salātin, etc. and accounts of the Travellers like Stephen Cacella, Ralph Fitch, Van den Broucke, etc. The earlier account left by Hsien Ts'ang may also be taken into account in this connection. In addition to the literature, land grants, a few inscriptions and last but not the least in importance, the numismatic evidence supply us with very interesting information regarding socio-economic condition of the region. The information left by the early British writers

also form an additional corrective to those we derive from other source.

With these sources proper we attempt to embark upon our study by the different aspects of the history of the Kāmata-Koch Bihar. The present work consists of five Chapters. The Introduction is followed by a Chapter connected with the problems relating to the origin of the peoples.

Next, there is a Chapter on the Historical Background which is based upon the latest information available in respect of the policies of the rulers towards the Mughal, Ahoms and Bhutan. This is followed by another on the religion and attempt has been made to discuss the various influences that were brought to bear upon the religions of the people. The next Chapter is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the formation of the society and the avocations of the people along with some other problems like sati rites and slavery, while in the second section we discuss the educational condition of the country laying emphasis on the growth of literatures by the Court poets and the Vaisnava reformers. The last Chapter is concerned with the economic life of the people.

The Appendices contain some interesting discussion relating to the Administration of the country and the numismatic experiments of the rulers.

Lastly, we present a map of this region which will, we think, be of some help for the proper understanding^{of} the areas under our study.

Notes and References

- 1 The Karatoyā was regarded as the western boundary of Prāgyjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa from the 7th century A.D. The evidences of the Chinese Tang Shu, and the Kālikapurāna and Yoginī Tantra may be cited in this connection.

See D.C.Sircar, Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India, 2nd ed., Delhi, 1971, pp.161 ff.

Cf. Uttarasyān Kañjagirih Karatoyā tu pascime || V.17

Tīrthasreṣṭha Dikṣu nadī purvasyān giri Kanyake |

Dakṣiṇe Brahmaputrasya lākṣyaḥ saṅgamāvadhīh |

Kāmarūpa iti khyātaḥ sarva Śatreṣv niscītaḥ || V.18

Yoginī Tantra (ed) S.S.Saraswati, Calcutta,

1385 Bengali San, Pt.II Pala XI

i.e. Kāmarūpa is bounded in the north by the Kañjagiri (probably Kanchenjunga) in Nepal, in the west by the Karatoyā, in the east by the Dikṣu river (identified with the Dikhu meeting the Brahmaputra near Sibsagar, Assam) and in the south by the confluence of the Brahmaputra and the Lākṣā (i.e. the Lakhyā). The Kālikapurāna (Ch.38, VS. 122-23) Lalitākānta (associated with the hill streams of Sandhyā) as the western boundary of Kāmarūpa. See D.C.Sircar, loc.cit. and also Cf. the legend of

Durlabhanārāyaṇa and his successors as rulers of the Kāmata Kingdom. (Gait, A History of Assam, 3rd ed. 1963,

Reprint, Calcutta, 1967, pp.44).

- 2 Cf. Kāmatā shown as 'Reino de Comatah' or 'Comatah' in some of the old Maps of Bengal e.g. that embraced in the Magni Mogolis Imperium of Balaeus's Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, Amsterdam, 1650 (Hule and Burnell, new ed., W. Crooke, Hobson-Jobson, Delhi, 1969, p.239).
- 3 E. Gait, op.cit., pp.43-4.
- 4 Cf. Hobson-Jobson, 2nd ed., p.248. In the thirteenth century the Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri (Tr. by Raverty, Vol.I Reprint, Delhi, 1970, pp.561-63) refers to the country of Kāmarūp (or Kāmrū), which according to the Rivāz-i-Salātin (Tr. by Abdus Salam, Delhi, Reprint, 1975, p.66 fn 3), lay to the east of the river called Namakdi identified by Blochmann with the river Karatoya (Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal, Calcutta, 1968, p.29).
- 5 H.N.Wright, Catalogue of the Coins in Indian Museum, Vol.II, p.173; A.W.Botham and R.Friel, Catalogue of the Provincial Cabinet of Coins, Assam (Supplementary), pp.148-52. The names of Kāmarūpa (Kāmrū) and Kāmatā also occur in both the Malda Madrāsā and the Kāntāduar Inscriptions of Hussain Shah. Kāmarūpasāssanāvalī (ed. P.N.Bhattacharyya), p.31 fn.
- 6 Narsanārayana, son and successor of Viśvasimha, ascended the throne on 1555 A.D. (Cf. the evidence of his coin bearing 1477 Saka) at the death of his father who reigned for 25 years

according to the testimony of the Darrang-Rāja-Vamsāvalī (Cf. Pancisa bahara prthibī pālilā tathā, V.273, N.C.Sharma ed., op.cit., Gauhati, 1973, p.55).

According to the tradition mentioned by T.H.Lewin, Candana became king in 1510 A.D. and was followed by his brother Visvasimha who ascended the throne in 1523 and reigned ruined for 31 years. An Account of the Koch Bihar State, Koch Bihar, 1876, p 11

7 M. Neog (ed.), Prāya Sasanāvalī, pp.3, 143.

8 Cf. Nārāyanī Coins of Raghudeva bearing Saka 1510 known to be the date of his accession (S.C.Ghosal, A History of Cooch Behar, Cooch Behar, 1942, p.345).

9 Ain-i-Akbari mentions Kamroop, which is called Kamroo and Kamatah falls within the domains of the Koch Kings (tr. Jarrett, Vol.II, p.117). Mirzā Nathan, the author of the Maharistān-i-Gharbī speaks of Lakṣmīnārāyana and Parīksitnārāyana as the Rājās of Kamatā and Kamarupa respectively and sometimes uses the Koch to signify both the domains (MS. p.257a). Abdul Hamid Lahori, the author of the Padishāhnāmah, is the first persian author who uses the terms Koch Bihar and Kamrūna to discriminate between the two Koch States - the original one established by Visvasimha and the latter carried out of it by his grandson Raghudeva. (See, Padishāhnāmah, The History of India, Vol.VII, H.M.Elliot ed, by J.Dowson, Allahabad, First Indian Edition, 1964,p.65).

The word Koch-Vihara (i. e. Koch Bihar or Cooch Behar) stands for the 'abode or land of the Koches'. It may also mean 'the land of sporting or dalliance with the Koches', and it has 'a mythical allusion to the Vihar of God Mahadeva with the Koch damsels. In fact the same God is described in mythology to be the progenitor of the present line of rulers of Cooch Behar'. H.N.Chowdhury, The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement, Cooch Behar, 1903, p.1. Hamilton observes that 'in order to distinguish this Vihar from the large territory of the same name near Patna, it has been usual to call it Koch Vihar (Cooch Behar - Cf. Rennell's Atlas)', sometimes also Nij Vihar. Hamilton also holds that 'the name of Kusha Vihar is doubtlessly derived, though the people now know nothing of it, from the Buddhist monastery or Vihara which existed there in ancient times, as did the province of Behar from another monastery near Gaya, or at Behar'. [Dr. Buchanan Hamilton's Account of Rangpur (Rangpura) ed. by F.Jenkins in J.A.S.B., No.73, 1838, p.15]

10 H.N.Chowdhury, op.cit., p.232.

11 Akharnama, Eng. tr., Beveridge, New Delhi, Reprint, 1973.
Vol.III, p.1067.

12 S.K.Bhuyan (ed.), Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, Vol.II, Gauhati, 1936, p.837.

13 Ibid., ^{vol.I} pp.230-31.

- 14 ^{Vol. I} Ibid., p. 242.
- 15 J.A.S.B., 1872, p. 65.
- 16 Ibid., pp. 65-66.
- 17 S.N. Bhattacharyya, op. cit., p. 5.
- 17a J.A.S.B., 1872, p. 65.
- 18 I. Sarkar, Aspects of Historical Geography of Prāgjyotiṣa-Kāmarūpa from Early & Medieval Records, (Unpublished doctoral thesis of N.B.U., 1963), S.V. Karatoya, pp. 131 ff.
- 19 S.N. Bhattacharyya, op. cit., pp. 6-7.
- 20 P.K. Bhattacharyya, Study of a few Geographical names of North Bengal etc. (Paper presented at the Inter-University Seminar on Geographical Factors in Indian History held at the A.I.H.C., Calcutta University, 1962).
- 21 P.N. Bhattacharyya, Kāmarūpa Śāsanavālī, p. 31.
- 22 Cf. the statement of B. Hamilton, quoted in Martin's Eastern India, Vol. II, p. 383.
- 23 S.N. Bhattacharyya, op. cit., p. 8.
- 24 The Pāthivya (J.A.S.B., 1872, p. 66) says "Koch Bihar is wellknown for its excellent water and mildness of climate".

.....

CHAPTER I

PEOPLE

The total area of the present district of Koch Bihar (also spelt as Cooch Behar) according to the survey of India is 3,386 sq.kms. (as on 1st July, 1971). In the Census of 1971, the population of the district is shown as 14,14,183.¹ Prior to the Census of 1872, there was no sincere attempt at the enumeration of the inhabitants of Koch Bihar.²

During the days of Visvasinha, the founder of the Kāmata-Koch dynasty, there was an attempt to ascertain the total population in the Kāmata-Koch kingdom. Results of the aforesaid census showed that the number of able-bodied men capable of bearing arms were 52,25,000 which, however, seems to be an exaggeration.³ Naranārāyana, the son and successor of Visvasinha is said to have introduced the poā-pāik enumeration (a rule counting four men as one poā-pāik) and on calculation, the total number was estimated at 17 lacs.⁴ The number of population as enumerated during the period of Modanārāyana, another subsequent ruler, ~~the number,~~ however, showed a sharp decrease to ten lacs.⁵

As regards ethnic identity of the people, Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri informs us that there were three non-Indian Mongoloid tribes such as Koch, Meoh and Tharu in Northern

Bengal.⁶ Afterwards, Shihāb-ud-din Talish who accompanied Mirgumla, the Subadar of Bengal in the conquest of Koch Bihar in 1661 A.D., observed that the inhabitants since ancient times, were the Koch and Mech tribes.^{6(a)}

The two tribes Koch and Mech are said to have belonged to the same stock.⁷ Their manners and customs were identical. Moreover, we learn that the Koches and the Meches freely intermarried from early times.⁸ Hājo, the Koch chief married his daughter to the Mech Hariyā Mondala and from this marriage, 'with the fabulous assistance of Siva', was born Viśu or Viśvasimha.⁹

The Koches are frequently referred to as Kuvācha (those do not speak a pure dialect) in the Purānas and Tantras.¹⁰

S.K.Chatterjee has rightly been observed that 'the present-day Bengali word is Kōc, or rather Kōmc, and this can well be from a Middle Indo-Aryan source-form *Kawōmca written* Kamōca, which could be properly Sanskritised as Kambōja. ... A later Sanskritisation of the non-nasalised form of the name Kōca, occurs in the Yoginī Tantra as Kuvaca'.¹¹

It is not unlikely that during the reign of the palas of Bengal, the Koches after their Hinduization organised a strong force and dethroned the Pāla ruler from Gauḍa and established their rule at least temporarily in Northern Bengal by the middle of the 10th century A.D.¹² The Dinajpur Pillar

inscription states the erection of a Siva temple by Kuñjareghatāvarṣa, king of Gauḍa who belonged to the race of the Kambōjas (Kambojānvaya-Gauḍapati).¹³

Grierson thinks that "the original Koches were the same as the Bodoḥ. 'Koch', 'Mesh', and 'Bara' or 'Bodo', all connoted the same tribe, or, at most, different septḥ of the same tribe".^{13(a)} The Koch tribe is said to have belonged to the Western Bodoḥ of the Indo-Mongoloids.¹⁴ However, this issue has created difference of opinions among the modern Scholars. Hinen Tsang, who came to Kāmarūpa remarked that 'the men were of small stature, with a dark yellow complexion'.¹⁵

Ralph Fitch who visited the Koch Kingdom in the sixteenth century further says, "The people have ears which be marvellous great, of a span long, which they draw out by devices when they be young".¹⁶

While according to Hodgson,¹⁷ the Koch belong to Bodo and Dhimal Group with a similar observation by Buchanan,¹⁸ Risley would like us to believe that the Koch are sprung from a large Dravidian stock with an admixture of Mongoloid blood.¹⁹ Dalton²⁰ also assigns these people to the Dravidian origin and thus, in the main, agrees with Risley, as noticed earlier.

According to Waddel, 'they (the Koch) do not, as stated by Col. Dalton, Mr. Risley and other, belong to the dark Dravidian aborigines of India, but are distinctly Mongoloid, though somewhat heterogeneous'.²¹

Gait also observes that 'in Jalpaiguri, Koch Bihar and Goalpara, the persons now known as Rajbansi are either pure Koches who, though dark, have a distinctly Mongoloid physiognomy, or else a mixed breed, in which the Mongoloid element usually preponderates'.²²

In spite of the above conflicting theories, it may be pointed out with little doubt that the Koch are a mixed race and that the 'true Koches were a Mongoloid race very closely allied to the Meches and the Garos'.²³

These Indo-Mongoloid people were first said to have settled over the entire Brahmaputra valley and then spread over the Northern Bengal (i.e. Koch Bihar, Rangpur and Dinajpur Districts).²⁴

It may be said that these Indo-Mongoloids or the Tibeto-Burmans penetrated into the above regions not long before the beginning of the Christian era.²⁵

Now, as to their Aryanisation we may first refer to its influence on Bengal from which it infiltrated into the North-eastern India. In Bengal, the Aryanisation had started during the Maurya period and it was stated to have completed in 7th century A.D. at the time of the Gupta rule in India.

The Indo-Mongoloids of the North-eastern India were brought under Hindu fold and their absorption was said to have begun immediately after central and North Bengal became

Aryanised,²⁶ Hsien Tsang who visited Kāmarūpa in the 7th century A.D. observed that the people were mostly initiated to Hinduism.²⁷

AS a result, the Koches who became Hinduised appeared to have abandoned their original Tibeto-Burman speech and had adopted the northern dialect of Bengali in North Bengal and Assamese was popularised in Assam.²⁸ The non-Aryan Indo-Mongoloid people might have played an important part when the people of this region were embracing Aryan culture at large. They possibly transmitted the culture they received from the Hindus and acted as 'the intermediaries in the transmission by land routes of the Brahmanical and Buddhistic cultures of India to Burma and beyond, during the greater part of the 1st millenium A.D., and probably in the early pre-Christian centuries as well'.²⁹

In course of Aryanisation, the place names were also normally being translated into Sanskrit or Sanskritised.³⁰

The Mongoloid Koches, soon after their Hinduisation particularly during the reign period of the two Koch kings Visvasimha and Naranārāyaṇa, were proud to call themselves as Rājavanśis and to claim to be called Kṣatriyas.³¹ It is interesting to note that the Rājavanśī people do not like to accept the Koches within their ethnic form. They like to treat them as a separate caste not belonging to Kṣatriya identity.

And since pre and post-independence period, the Rājavanśīs are spearheading this movement through their organisation called Kṣatriya samity.

But the above claim of the Rājavanśīs does not appear to be tenable on the following grounds :

First, both the Rājavanśīs and the Koches are physiognomically indivisible and they inherit in them the Mongoloid blood profusely. Secondly, these tribes freely intermarried each other since early days. Thirdly, both of them carry on the same religion and culture and are regulated by the same general norms of life. Fourthly, likewise the Rājavanśīs the Koch people also called themselves Kṣatriyas. Both of them tend to refer to the story of Parusūrāma and associate themselves with the same tradition in order to establish their Kṣatriya identity.³²

Similarly, Yoginī Tantra narrates a story which speaks of the Kṣatriya origin of Viśvasimha, the founder of the Koch dynasty. It describes that Lord Śiva was infatuated by the beauty of a Koch woman named Hīrā, the wife of Hariyā Maṇḍala. Śive is said to have had intercourse with Hīrā and gave birth to Viśu, who later took the name Viśvasimha.³³

The above story undoubtedly ascribed Viśvasimha's birth to Divine origin. Here, it may be mentioned that unlike many other rulers of India, Viśvasimha also required to be brought under Kṣatriya fold prior to his consecration, as Kṣatriya identity of a ruler was considered to be the important

criterion to become a king in those days. We know that during Viśvasiṅha's time Brāhmaṇas were settled in the Kāmatā-Koch kingdom and that they introduced the Sāstric injunctions in the country.

Since the Kṣatriya identity of Viśvasiṅha was established, the people within his kingdom would start in all likelihood following their king. Thus, S.K.Chatterjee has rightly been suggested that 'with the full Hinduization of the Koches, and rise in power of their chiefs, Kṣatriya origin was, as was, natural, found out or suggested for them'.³⁴

The people of the Kāmatā-Koch Bihar Kingdom found an impetus to trace their identity with the royal dynasty and called themselves Rājavanśis.³⁵

It would thus appear that it was the same stock with which both the Rājavanśis and the Koches were related. And the Koches or the Rājavanśis were one and the same race.

Notes and References

- 1 Durgadas Majumdar, West Bengal District Gazetteers, Koch Bihar, Calcutta, 1977, p.2.
- 2 Ibid., p.45.
- 3 Cf. Bāyāna je lakṣa sainna pañcis hāzār | V.198
N.C.Sharma (ed.), Darrang Rājā Vāṁśāvalī, Gauhati
1973, p.40.
Gait (A History of Assam, Calcutta, 3rd ed, 1963,
Reprint, 1967, p.50), also contends that this number
is clearly an exaggeration.
- 4 N.N. Paul (ed.) Mahārāja Vāṁśāvalī (in Bengali),
Cooch Behar, 1993 Bengali San, p.4.
Also see S.C.Ghosal, A History of Cooch Behar,
Cooch Behar, 1942, p.157.
- 5 Durgādāsa, Rājavāṁśāvalī, 1270 B.S., p.77;
Ghosal, op.cit., p.213.
The decrease in number of population as compared to
what we get at the time of Naranārāyaṇa was perhaps due to
cession of the eastern part of Naranārāyaṇa's Kingdom at
the time of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa, son of Naranārāyaṇa, and Raghudeva,
the nephew of the king who ^{had} entrusted upon Raghudeva the
governorship of Koch Hājo, the tract lying to the east of
the river saṅkosa.
- 6 Minhāj-i-Sirāj, Tabaqāt-i-Nasiri, Eng.tr. by Major Raverty,
Vol.I, London, 1881, Reprint, New Delhi, 1970, p.560.

- 6(a) Fathiyya in J.A.S.B., Vol.41, 1872, p.66.
- 7 N.N.Vasu, The Social History of Kamarupa, Vol.I,
New Delhi, First Reprint, 1983, p.130.
- 8 Gait, op.cit., p.48.
- 9 W.Robinson, A Descriptive Account of Assam, First
published 1841, Reprinted 1975, Delhi, p.262.
- 10 Gait, op.cit., p.47.
The Koch race is referred to in the Brahma Vaivarta
Purāna (Brahmakhaṇḍa, Adhāya, 10) quoted by Ghosal in
History of Cooch Behar, p.5.
There has also been mention of Kuvāsa in Jātikaundī
and Yoginī Tantra, See Loc.cit.
- 11 S.K.Chatterjee, Kirāta-Jana-Kṛti, Calcutta, 1951,
Revised ed. 1974, p.113.
- 12 D.C.Sircar, Pala-Sena yuger vaissāṅga Carit (Bengali),
Calcutta, 1982, p.75.
Also the Introduction by D.C.Sircar in the
Gaṇḍarājamālā, Reprinted, Calcutta, 1975, p.10.
R.P.Chandra also suggests the *identification*
of the Koches with the Kambojas. See Gaṇḍarājamālā, pp.41-46,
1975
- 13 According to some Kuṅjaraghataṅvara stands for Śaka
880 (=866 A.D.), see R.P.Chanda, Gaṇḍarājamālā
1975 op.cit., pp.41-46.

This view has not been accepted by all. Sircar and other perhaps rightly suggest it as the name of the Kamboja king. See the Introduction by D.C.Sircar in the Gaudarājamaḷa, loc.cit.

- 13(a) G.A.Grierson, Linguistic Survey of India, Vol.III, Part II, First ed. 1903, Reprint, Delhi, 1967, p.95. He has referred to the traditional origin of the Koch Kings from a Mech father and Koch mother.

- 14 S.K.Chatterjee, op.cit., p.112.

The Indo-Mongoloid tribes were classed into Tibeto-Burman and Siamese-Chinese branches of the single Sino-Tibetan speech family. See Chatterjee, Ibid., pp.40-41.

He also informs us that these tribes 'seem not to have moved much further to the east of their primitive home round about the sources of the Yang-tse-kiang at the time of Aryan penetration into India (1500 B.C.) when the Tibeto-Chinese race, came to the Indian side of the Himalayas, to Nepal and North Bihar, Bengal and Assam, they possibly mingled with the Kot and Dravidian peoples already established there'.....
 'The other branch of the Tibeto-Chinese peoples, the Tai or Shan', according to Chatterjee, 'carried on its incursions in North-eastern India in successive wars, of which we know in detail one only, the Ahom invasion of Assam in the 13th century'.

See Chatterjee, Origin and Development of Bengali Language,

First published by George Allen and Unwin Ltd, London, 1970,
Calcutta, 1926, Vol.I, p.29.

Chatterjee has referred to the Kirāta people somewhere else. These Kirātas are mentioned in the Yajur and Atharva Veda and also in the Mahābhārata. The Kirāta people were the Mongoloids. To the Aryan speakers, the Mongoloid people who were their compatriots were designated as Kiratas. 'They may for convenience be described in English as Indo-Mongoloids; and this is a term which defines at once their Indian connection and their place within the cultural milieu in which they found themselves, as well as their original racial affinity'.

See, The place of Assam in the History and civilisation of India, Gauhati University, ^{Reprint,} 1970, p.16 and the Kirāta-Jana-Kṛti, p.38.

- 15 S.K. Chatterjee, The Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India, p.22.
- 16 J.Horton Ryley, Ralph Fitch - England's pioneer to India and Burma, London, 1899, p.111.
- 17 J.A.S.B., Vol.XVIII, Part II 1949, pp.704-706.
- 18 Martin, Eastern India, Vol.III, 1838, p.538.
- 19 H.H.Risley, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, (1891), Vol.1, p.491.
- 20 Col. Dalton, Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, 1872, pp.89-92.

- 21 L.A.Waddel, The Tribes of the Brahmaputra Valley -
a contribution on their physical Types and affinities,
First published 1901, Reprinted, Delhi, 1978, p.48.
- 22 Gait, op.cit., pp.47-48.
- 23 Ibid., p.47, Grierson, op.cit., p.95.
- 24 S.K.Chatterjee, Kirata-Jana-Krti, p.46.
- 25 S.K.Chatterjee, O.D.B.L., Vol.I, p.69.
- 26 Loc.cit., V.R.Dikastar (The Aryanisation of India(Assam),
I.H.Q., XXI, pp.29ff), however, states that 'the
Aryanisation of Eastern India has begun in the age of
Rigveda with the credit for this achievement going to
Mathava of Videha country and to his celebrated Purohita
Gotama. Between the composition of Rigveda Samhita and
of the Satapatha Brahmana there was a slow infiltration
of the Aryan ideas and ideals beyond the river Sadanira.
By the time of the Aitareya Brahmana, the movement towards
the east gained further impetus'.
- 27 S.Beal, Records of the Western World, II, London,
1906, pp.194ff.
- 28 G.A.Grierson, op.cit., p.95; S.K.Chatterjee, Kirata-Jana-
Krti, p.112.
Grierson again observes that 'the name 'Koch', in
fact, everywhere connotes a Hinduized Bodo who has
abandoned his ancestral religion for Hinduism and the

ancestral Bedo Language for Bengal or Assamese',
See op. cit., p. 95.

29 S.K.Chatterjee, op. cit., p. 55.

30 Chatterjee, The place of Assam in the History and
Civilisation of India, p. 17.

He refers to a few places like Brahmanutra and Luhitva,
the names of Great rivers of Assam, and Prāgjyotiṣa and
Kāmarūpa, names of the province and states that these are
in all likelihood approximations to Sanskrit of Pre-Aryan
names.

31 S.K.Chatterjee, Kirāta-Jana-Kṛti, p. 112.

We come across the term Rājavanī as referred to
in the Kānatesvara Kulakārikā of Śrutidhara (Composed in
16th Century A.D.) Khan Choudhuri Amanatulla Ahmed,
Kuch Bihar Itihāsa (Bengali), p. 39

Also see, H.N.Dutta Barua (ed.), Guru Garita,
Nalbari, Assam, 1955, p. 747.

32 These Rājavanī and Koch people claimed themselves to be
the descendants of the Kṣatriyas. But they had to escape,
as they said, themselves from the wrath of Parasurāma of
Vṛgu dynasty who led a crusade against the Haihaya Kṣatriyas
between the years C 2550-2350 B.C. and, to take shelter
in the lap (Koch) of Bhagavati in the Koch Land.

See C.Sanyal, The Rajbansis of North Bengal,
Calcutta, 1965, p. 17.

However, Scholars like H. Boileau (quoted by C. Sanyal, op. cit., p. 11) and Risley (op. cit., p. 491) do not accept the Ksatriya ancestry of the Rājavanśis as there is no historical evidence.

- 33 Yogini Tantra, Chap. XIII, Slokas, 2-19.
 34 S.K. Chatterjee, op. cit., p. 112.
 35 Gunabhirama Barua, Āgam Burañi, Gauhati, Reprint, 1972, p. 40.

L.A. Waddel (op. cit., p. 48), says that 'the term Koch therefore not being a favoured one in Bengal, it is usual to find them dropping that title whenever there is a resident raja of their own kindred as at Koch Bihar (Kuch Behar), Darrang, Bijni, Mechpara, Sidi, Beltola, Jalpaiguri and Lakhi. At such places they call themselves by the higher sounding Indian title 'Rajabansi' or 'Royal race'.

However, it is said that the Rājavanśis were mostly cultivators. In the lower delta the Rājavanśis were said to be a subdivision of Tiyars (H. Beverly, Census Report of Bengal (1872) Vol. I, p. 130). Hunter also opines that the name Rājavanśi was adopted by the cultivators and they were 'Semi-Hinduised Aborigines' (Statistical Account of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar, Vol. X (1976), pp. 347-48, Ibid., jal-p. 253, Ibid., Cooch Behar, p. 341) Gait says that 'the term is also a title of Tiyars, Kaibarttas, Namasudras and other fishing castes, also of Barua Mugs of Chittagong and

of Bagdis, Mals etc. (Census Report of Bengal, 1901) Appendix I, p. XXXVIII. Risley, while commenting on the term Rājavanśis observes that this title 'serves much the same purpose for the lower stratum of Hindu population of North Bengal as the title does for the land holding class of dubious origin all over India'. See op.cit., p. 491.

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CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The early history of the Kāmatā-Koch kingdom, like that of many other kingdoms of medieval India is shrouded in obscurity. However, we get from the Āṣm̃ Burañii and the Guru Carita that one Durlabhanārāyaṇa (c. 1330-1350 A.D.) ascended the throne of Kāmatā.¹ Guru Carita records the constant warfare occurred between Durlabhanārāyaṇa and Dharmanārāyaṇa, the latter who is said to have ruled over the region bordering the river Mahānandā in North Bengal.² Peace was later on concluded between them resulting in the division of the Kāmatā Kingdom, in which the whole of the eastern part of the Kingdom went to Durlabhanārāyaṇa. After this division of territories, Durlabhanārāyaṇa took the title the Kāmatāśvara and Dharmanārāyaṇa styled himself as the Gauḍeśvara,³ the title perhaps attributed to the latter for the reason that he annexed certain territory from the Kingdom of Gauḍa.⁴ It is said that during Durlabhanārāyaṇa's reign, there were occasional Bhutan raids in the north-eastern part of his kingdom. The king, however, strongly opposed the Bhutiyās and ultimately ousted them from the Kāmatā Kingdom with the help of Caṇḍīvara.⁵

Indranārāyaṇa (c. 1350-65 A.D.), son of Durlabhanārāyaṇa succeeded to the throne.⁶ On the basis of a coin dated 759 A.H. (A.D. 1357-58) minted at Chavlistān alias Kārup of Sikandar Shāh,

the Bengal Sultan, it is suggested that Sikandar Shāh led an invasion to Kāmarūpa in 1357 A.D.⁷

After the middle of the fourteenth century the history of Kāmatā is most uncertain.⁸

The first Kāmatā kingdom of which we possess any connected account is that of the Khyan or Khen dynasty.⁹ In the first half of the fifteenth century, a new line of kings known as Khyan or Khen dynasty ascended the throne of Kāmatā.¹⁰ Hunter¹¹ is of opinion that the Khen dynasty succeeded the pāla dynasty in the government of Kāmarūpa. According to the Kāmatesvara Kulakārikā of Śrutidhara Hīpanārāyaṇa, the ruler of Kāmatā originally belonged to the Vardhana family¹² took shelter at Kāmatā and became famous as Rājavanśī. Incidentally, D.C. Sircar identifies Vardhanakṣṭa with Bardhankot and makes it a part of the Nivṛti country.¹³

Nīladvaja, the founder of the Khen dynasty, is said to have become into eminence from an humble position.¹⁴ His capital was at the city of Kāmatānagara on the bank of the Dharīā.¹⁵ It is likely that Nīladvaja occupied the city which was already in existence and afterwards, he made certain innovations. R.D. Banerjee, while commenting on the Khen dynasty perhaps rightly pointed out that these mongoloid people only utilised the fortification which had been built several centuries ago.¹⁶

The Gosanīmāngala, while describing the building of the Capital by the celestial architect Visvakarmā in a very short time, actually, perhaps referred to the fortification of the existing forts like Kāmatāpura.^{16a}

Nīladvaja was succeeded by his son, Cakradhvaja on the throne in C 1460 A.D. We learn from Risalatunah Shuhada, a later Muslim work that there was a campaign against the king of Kāmatā led by Bengal Sultan Barbak Shāh¹⁷ who perhaps could not make much headway against the ruler of Kāmatāpura.¹⁸

Nīlāvara who succeeded his father in 1480 A.D. is said to have extended his kingdom from the Karatoyā in the west to Badnadi on the east.¹⁹ Gait says that Nīlāvara conquered some north-eastern territories which were previously under the muslim occupation.²⁰ Nīlāvara is credited to have constructed the long route stretching from Kāmatāpura to Ghorāghāt (Rangpur), remains of which may be found in the present Diphata-Mekhligani Road.²¹ However, his rule came to an end in 1498 by an attack from Hussain Shāh, the Sultan of Gauda (1493-1519). The Kāmatā king was defeated and the city of Kāmatāpura was captured.²² Hussain Shāh reduced the country as far east as Badnadi and erected a pillar of victory at Malda (dated 1501-2 A.D.)²³ But no sooner had Hussain Shāh left Kāmatāpura, the Bhuyāns some of whom already surrendered to the Sultan²⁴ rose into revolt and killed Dānial or Dulal gāji, the successor of Hussain Shāh.²⁵ Āsām Burañji gives the name Masandar Gāji, stated to be the

son of Dulal Gāji¹⁴⁰ conquered this region. And after his reign, Sultan Ghius, possibly the general of Hussain Shāh was said to have attacked Kāmatā. He perhaps built a mosque at Hājo and was buried there. This graveyard is commonly known as 'Pea Mecca' or (one fourth of Mecca).²⁶ After his death the Bhuyāns were said to have asserted their independence.²⁷

The rise of Visvasimha at this hour, perhaps, put an end to the period of greatness of the Bāro Bhuyāns. According to the Akbarnāmah the founder of the new dynasty was Bīsa (i. e. Visvasimha).²⁸ It appears from the Darrang Rāja Vamsāvalī²⁹ that Visvasimha was the son of one Hariyā mondala, Chief of the twelve Koch tribes.³⁰ As a matter of fact, Visvasimha was a man of unusual enterprise and courage, and he soon established his position by defeating the Bhuyān chiefs³¹ one after another till he made himself the master of the dominion extending as far as the Karatoya in the west and the Badnadī in the east.³² He described himself as Kāmatesvara (i. e., lord of Kāmatā, possible in imitation of the tutelary deity of the country known as Kāmatesvarī, and his capital was Kāmatānagara.³³ In the contemporary records also Visvasimha has been described as the lord of Kāmatā.³⁴ During his period of coronation,³⁵ Sīmī, his elder brother held the Royal Umbrella on his head which was the duty of a vassal.³⁶ His campaign against the Ahom is said to have proved abortive and he had to retreat.³⁷ But Visvasimha's victory over the ruler of Gauḍa has been mentioned in the

Rājopādhāyana, and Yoginī Tantra. 38

At the time of Visvasimha's death in C 1555 A.D., his two eldest sons, Malladeva and Śukladhvaja, were at Vāṇasī, where under a learned Brāhmaṇa named Brahmānanda, 39 Narasiṅha, one of the elder sons of the deceased king ascended the vacant throne. 40 The two brothers returned to Koch Bihar immediately and defeated the latter who fled from the kingdom. 41 Malladeva then ascended the throne and assumed the name Naranārāyaṇa. 42 He appointed Śukladhvaja the Yuvarāja (heir-apparent) under the name of Saṅgrāmasimha (Śukladhvaja). 43 He is said to have made an extensive conquests of eastern Indian territories including the whole of the Brahmaputra valley, the Khāsi and Jaintia Hills, Manipura, Tripura and part of Sylhet. 44 In this great campaign his brother Śukladhvaja, who was also known as Cilārāi or 'the Kite king' because of his 'Blitzkrieg' tactics, displayed great generalship. 45

The territory over which Naranārāyaṇa is said to have established his permanent conquest has been narrated in the Akbar-nāmah: "on the east is the river Brahmaputra, on the north is lower Tibet and Assam, and on the south Ghoraghāt, On the west is Tihut". 46

Naranārāyaṇa's nephew Raghudeva at the instigation of some officers left the Koch Capital and settled near Barnagara on the banks of the Manās river and constructed there a fort. 47

Further, it is interesting to note that Raghudeva fought with his uncle not engaging himself in the war but dressed his one hundred and twenty wives as soldiers and sent them to oppose his uncle.⁴⁸ The king Naranārāyana was ashamed of it and left the battle field. The king made over to Raghudeva the region to the east of the Sankosa river. Raghudeva was said to have agreed to pay annual tribute to the king.⁴⁹ The region lying to the west of the Sankosa upto the Karatoya river continued to be the kingdom of the original line of the Koch dynasty. As regards the reason why Naranārāyana divided the kingdom and allowed Raghudeva to rule over to that tract lying to the east of the river Sankosa, nothing more is known from any source. It appears, however, that Naranārāyana was not merely moved by emotion but also from the political exigencies. It is possible that the hostility of the Ahoms and the rising power of the Mughals from Bengal prevailed upon him to take such a decision and thereby putting his rebellious nephew in charge of the territory adjacent to kingdom of the Ahoms and making it a buffer zone between the main Koch territory lying to the west of the Sankosa and the kingdom of the Ahoms. Again, in order to keep in tact an extensive empire, the state had to employ a vast army in addition to the maintenance of the huge administrative apparatus which would cause much pressure upon the state economy.

These considerations also perhaps induced Naranārāyana to take a decision regarding the division of

the kingdom.

After Naranārāyaṇa's death Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa succeeded to his father, ~~Naranārāyaṇa~~, in 1537 A.D. He has been described as a very ineffective ruler. Raghudeva declared himself independent and struck coins in his own name. He also refused to acknowledge the vassalage of the Koch Kingdom of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa.⁵⁰ Consequently, war began between Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa and Raghudeva. Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa sought help from the Bengal governor Mānsiṃha. They met each other at a place named Ānandapura (probably a Koch frontier town in the vicinity of Ghoraghāt region).⁵¹ The Mughals agreed to help Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa. On the other hand, Raghudeva allied himself with the pāthan chief Īsā Khān of Bhāti.⁵² Raghudeva then attacked the Koch King Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa and Bāhirbund was annexed to the former's kingdom. At this situation, Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa appealed to Mānsiṃha for help. The Bengal viceroy, sent the army without delay. Raghudeva fought bravely but was thoroughly routed. Hearing this news, Īsā Khān rushed to Raghudeva's help. But the army of Īsā Khān could not proceed far as Mānsiṃha combining with the force of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa made a bold attack on Īsā Khān's stronghold. Īsā Khān, however, fought hard and drove back the enemy with great loss.

But this victory of Īsā Khān made the vanquished Bengal Viceroy conscious for making a strong ~~next~~ defence against the Koch-Mughal onslaught. Parīksit, son of Raghudeva also pursued his father's policy against Koch Bihar. Here also,

the combined attack of the Koch-Mughal armies brought ultimately Parīkṣit to Mughal subjugation. Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa was temporarily put in charge of the eastern "part of Kāmarūpa". But with the change in Bengali Government, Qāsim Khān, the new Bengal Subādār brought Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa in confinement to Dacca. It may be pointed out that Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa's territory extended upto Ghoraghāt on the south,⁵³ Saṅkosa on the east, and Karatoyā on the west.

But during the time of Vīṅḥārāyaṇa,^a the extent of Koch kingdom became limited. And the Bhutiyās also did not recognise the loyalty of the king. It is easy to infer that he (Vīṅḥārāyaṇa) continued to remain under Mughal Vassalage, paying regular tributes to the Mughal Emperor. The then Bengal viceroy, Qāsim Khān, was an energetic and able man, and Vīṅḥārāyaṇa^a dared not turn away from the path of faithful obedience even if he had desired it.

The long reign of Prāṇanārāyaṇa (1632-1665 A.D.) is worth mentioning for more reasons than one. It was because of the energy and shrewdness of the king that Koch Bihar shook off foreign yoke and regained its independence for nearly seven years. Afterwards, Koch Bihar turned into a vassal state of the Mughals. After Prāṇanārāyaṇa's death a series of weaklings appeared, under whom the kingdom slowly met with its doom. During his last days, the boundary of his kingdom as mentioned in the Alangirnāmah⁵⁴ was extended over 600 square miles. Tajhat,

Bāhirband parganā were on the south, Puskarapura near Khontaghāt (in goalpara district) on the east and Patganw in Morāng was on the west of Kingdom.

After Prānanārāyana, there were three rulers viz. Modanārāyana (1665-80 A.D.), Vasudevanārāyana (1680-82) and Mahīndranārāyana (1682-93 A.D.) during whose reign period there was spread of mutual strife within the kingdom.⁵⁵ The Bhutiyās began to interfere in the sovereignty of the Koch territory. But it is to be noted that there was no Mughal hold on Koch Bihar during this period.⁵⁶ After the death of Mahīndranārāyana, Yajñanārāyana, the Nāzir usurped the throne and declared himself king on the ground that he was the oldest of the near (sapindh) relations of the deceased. After his death, Rūpanārāyana, the descendant of Mahīnārāyana (the first Nāzir Deo) and the nephew of Yajñanārāyana then became the ruler of the Kāmata Koch kingdom. With him the main lineage of the Koch dynasty was changed⁵⁷ and the period of rule from among the members of the Nāzir Deo family started. It was during his time that the Chaklajat Estates viz. Bodā, Pātgrāma and Pūrvabhāga were ceded to the Imperial dominions although the zemindary right was allowed to be enjoyed by the king on the condition of payment of an annual tribute to the Bengal Nawab.⁵⁸ The subsequent rulers Upendranārāyana and Devendranārāyana ruled only for a few years.⁵⁹ During Upendranārāyana's regime Saiyad Ahmed, the Fanjdar of Rangpur led an invasion into the former's kingdom in aid of Dīnanārāyana, son of Satyanārāyana, the Dewan Deo, who

was aspired for the throne. With the help of the Faujdar Dīnanārāyana could usurp the throne for eight days only.⁶⁰

During the reign of Dhairyendranārāyana, the feud between the king and the Dewān on the question of succession became prominent.⁶¹ Bhutiya's sustained interest in the affairs of Koch Bihar throughout the 18th century centred on ensuring her hold on the fertile region known as the western Duars.⁶² In 1769 A.D. the boundary between Koch Bihar and the territory of the Company was demarcated. Some tāluks of Gitaldaha and Batrishāzari parganās were separated from Chākā Kakinā and included in the kingdom of Koch Bihar.⁶³

Koch-Bhutiya Relation

Bhutan proper lies within the inner Himalayan zone. Dalton (1872) observes that the conflict between the Koch and the Bhutanese had taken place "three hundred or four hundred years ago".⁶⁴

In the main stream of Indian history, Bhutan had earliest links with the kingdom of Kāmarūpa. The Yoginī Tantra, as mentioned earlier, has shown the extent of Kāmarūpa which included Bhutan. Gait also cites the authority of the Yoginī Tantra ^{and} says that "in ancient times, Bhutan seems, occasionally at least, to have formed part of the kingdom of Kamarupa".⁶⁵ Hiuen Tsang during his visit of Kāmarūpa placed the

circumference of the country at 10,000 li (nearly 1700 miles). On the basis of above account Cunningham pointed out that the Kāmarūpa comprised "the whole of Brahmaputra valley as well as Cooch Behar and Bhutan".⁶⁶

It is said that the Tibetan settlers displaced the persons belonging to the tribe called Tephoo from Bhutan. Bhutan was ruled by this tribe for more than two centuries. They were generally believed to have been people of Koch Bihar.⁶⁷ Gait has referred to the statement of Shihāb-ud-din Tālish, who accompanied Mir Jumla in 1661 A.D. in the Koch Bihar campaign, and who said that the people of that country (Bhutan) then spoke a dialect allied to that of the Koches.⁶⁸ It is important to notice that the rise of the Koch dynasty to political pre-eminence with their metropolis at Kamatāpura roughly coincided with the expulsion of the Koch tribe from Bhutan by ^{Tk}Tibetans under the first Dharma-Rāja. The Koch Chronicler asserted that Prince Narasiṅha, the brother of Naranārāyana went to Bhutan and made himself ruler there.⁶⁹ However, the historic fact of long struggle between the Koch and the Bhutanese for supremacy over the plains of the Duars run in continuation of the earlier confrontations between them.

The Shahdang of Bhutan was called Dharmarāja. The European scholars used to call him by the latter term. Regarding the term Dharmarāja it is presumed that it in all likelihood was in vogue among the people bordering Bhutan long before Ralph Fitch's visit to Cooch Behar in 1583. "There is," he says, "a

country four days' journey from Couche..... which is called Bottanter and the citie Bottia, the King is called Dermain".⁷⁰ While Bottanter is admittedly Bhutan, Dermain can be no other than caecella's Dromarāja (1626) or the Dharmarāja of Bhutan.⁷¹ Surgeon Rennie compared the legend collected by Krishna Kanta Bose (1875) with that of 'the traditional account furnished to Eden by Cheboo Lama' (1864) and observed that the two accounts helped to 'specify the people of Cooch Behar as those who originally possessed Bhutan' and to indicate Tibet as the place from which the first Dharmarāja came.⁷² The first Dharmarāja came to Bhutan "two to three hundred years ago" and took possession of Punākāhā ousting the Koch Prince. He then took measures for "introducing law in lawless Bhutan". The Dharmarāja sent 'armed men to roam over mountains and forests, rocks and caves' to stop robbery and theft.⁷³ Instead of ascending the throne and exercising temporal power, he brought a Tibetan from Lasha⁷⁴ and appointed him Prime Minister who, according to a later authority, came to be known as Devarāja.⁷⁵

The Rajonākhyaṇa⁷⁶ records that Viśvasimha sent a letter addressed to the Devarāja and Dharmarāja through an envoy asking them to acknowledge submission and to pay tribute to him. The Devarāja insulted the envoy. At this, Viśvasimha waged a sanguinary battle against the Bhutias and conquered the territories upto foothills of the Himalayan range. Next, he planned to attack the capital of Bhutan. Just on the eve of his attack, the Devarāja appealed to Viśvasimha for a treaty.

A treaty was concluded between the two parties. The Devarāja agreed to pay an annual tribute at a stipulated rate and also agreed that he would render military assistance to the Koch King at the time of war.

During the reign of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa, son of Naranārāyaṇa, Stephen Cacella (1627 A.D.), a Christian missionary, journeyed to Bhutan through the kingdom of Kāmata. He has written that several years before the uncle of king Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa travelled to the hilly country of Bhutan. He was arrested there and made to plough land and king Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa was so angry on learning this news that he ordered all the Bhutiya subjects of his kingdom to be imprisoned. These reprisals continued until the Bhutiyas released his uncle.⁷⁷

During the reign period of Viṣṇunārāyaṇa, the Koch kingdom became weak. The Rāikats discarded the Koch suzerainty.⁷⁸ They stopped paying annual tribute to the Koch Rājās.⁷⁹

After the death of Mahārājā Prānanārāyaṇa, four sons of Mahīnārāyaṇa, the Nāzir Deo, tried to get the throne.⁸⁰ And when they were engaged in disputes Modanārāyaṇa, son of Prānanārāyaṇa, ascended the throne. He ceased the power of Nāzir Deo and offered the post of Prime Ministership to a man of royal blood. He sentenced to death some of the officers who sided with Mahīnārāyaṇa and banished others. This policy culminated in open war. Jagatnārāyaṇa the eldest son of Mahīnārāyaṇa who had created much unrest within the kingdom, was killed under the

orders of the King,⁸¹ and at last Mahīnārāyaṇa was also sentenced to death. The other sons of Mahīnārāyaṇa allying with the Devarāja of Bhutan fought against the king but it was of no avail. Subsequently, the unrest was somewhat subsided with appointment of Yajñanārāyaṇa, son of Mahīnārāyaṇa, as Chatra Nāsir.⁸²

With the help of the Bhutiyās the three sons of Mahīnārāyaṇa tried to get the throne. And the news was sent to Baikānthapura. Having heard this news, the Rāikat brother Bhuja Deva and Jaga Deva marched towards Koch Bihar at the head of a large army and drove out them from the kingdom.⁸³

Vasudevanārāyaṇa, the third son of Pranānārāyaṇa, was placed on the throne by the Rāikats. When they left for Baikānthapura, Yajñarāyaṇa ungratefully put Vasudevanārāyaṇa to death.⁸⁴ He ascended the throne for eight days and declared himself king. No sooner the news of the king Vasudevanārāyaṇa's death had reached Baikānthapura than the Rāikat brothers rushed to Koch Bihar and a heavy fighting took place between Yajñanārāyaṇa and the Rāikats on the left bank of the Mānsāi river.⁸⁵ Yajñarāyaṇa managed to escape to the hills.⁸⁶ Afterwards Mahīndranārāyaṇa became king in 1682 A.D. During his reign, the king courted friendship of Yajñanārāyaṇa who was appointed as the Nāsir. The Bhutiyās also began to render help to the king Mahīndranārāyaṇa.⁸⁷ After Mahīndranārāyaṇa's death, there was no living descendant of Mahārāja Virnarāyaṇa. The kingdom was rendered powerless. Taking advantage of it, Yajñarāyaṇa, the Nara Deva again asserted independence and declared himself king. He was

said to have assisted by the Pāthāns who were opposed to the Mughals. Following this, the Raikats again appeared on the scene. They resumed struggle against Yajñanārāyaṇa. In a protracted battle between 1700 to 1702 A.D., the Raikats were killed. Yajñanārāyaṇa also died near Pātgrāma.⁸⁸

During the reign period of Upendranārāyaṇa, the Bhutiyās were said to have extended their territory upto a portion of the plains. The king could not oppose them. Moreover, when the Mughal Faujdar of Rangpur attacked the western portion of the Koch kingdom, Upendranārāyaṇa found no other alternative than to conclude a treaty with the Bhutiyās with whose help, king Upendranārāyaṇa defeated the Mughals and the faujdar escaped towards Rangpur in 1737 A.D.⁸⁹ The influence of the Bhutiyās this increased with the king's dependence upon them in fighting with Mughals. The influence of the Bhutiyās was more felt during the period of Upendranārāyaṇa than any period of the earlier rulers. One of their representatives was stationed at Koch Bihar⁹⁰ with some soldiers and it was necessary to take his assent in certain matters of administration.⁹¹ The Subā of Burā Duar (Bakshā Duar) used to come every year to Chēkākhatā with the Chief Bhutiya Officers to present Nazar to the king. They offered horses, Kochin and Debānga Cloths, Śvatamālā, Bhotmālā, musk, white cowries, walnuts, Bhot ghee, Bhot plums etc.⁹² The king also proceeded there accompanied by the Nazir and the Dewān, and presents with double those brought by the Bhutiyās, were offered as Inām (Khilāt). In addition to the

above, the Bhutan representatives were regaled with a feast arranged by the Koch king.⁹³ And when the king Devendranārāyana was assassinated by Rati Sarmā at the instigation of the royal priest Rāmananda, the Bhutiyās rendered death punishment to Rāmananda.

During the period of Dhairyendranārāyana⁹⁴ there occurred a battle with the Bhutiyās on the issue of death of Rāmanārāyana, the Devan Deo, who had been appointed with having the consent of the Bhutiya.⁹⁵

→ The Devarāja of Bhutan was then determined to depose Mahārāja Dhairyendranārāyana. He sought approval of the Lāma of Tibet.⁹⁶

In 1770 A.D. Dhairyendranārāyana and Surendranārāyana the Devan were imprisoned by the Bhutiyās at the usual gathering mentioned above and were carried off to the hills, appointing his brother, Rājendranārāyana as Rāja in his place.⁹⁷ On the death of Rājendranārāyana shortly afterwards, the Nāzir placed Dharendranārāyana, son of Dhairyendranārāyana on the throne. The Bhutiyās had on their side appointed Rājendranārāyana as Rāja of Koch Bihar, the son of the captive Rāja's eldest brother, each party supported their respective candidates and the Nāzir Deo, being wasted and driven out of the country, applied to the East India Company for assistance. The East India Company which had been carefully observing the growing power of the Bhutiyās in Koch Bihar, responded to the appeal forthwith. They came and

ousted the Bhutiyās from Koch Bihar.⁹⁸ A Treaty No. (XXXIII)⁹⁹ was concluded on the 5th day of April, 1773 A.D. between the East India Company and Nāsir Deo Khagendranārāyana on behalf of ^{King} Dharendranārāyana who was minor at that time. The Rājā agreed to acknowledge subjection to the British Government to allow Koch Bihar to be included within Bengal and to make over to the British Government one-half of the annual revenue of Koch Bihar for ever.

Koch and Sannyasī Revolt

In the wake of the decline of the empire of the Mughals, Koch Bihar along with the plains of the Duars like many parts of northern India were exposed to the deprivations of wandering bands known as the Sannyasīs.¹⁰⁰ The Koch monarchy founded by Visvasimha early in 16th century, had already lost its vitality and was torn by division, and internecine shifts. In the year 1713 A.D. Darpadeva, the Rājā of Baikantapura, with the help of some bandits from Morāng hills (Darjeeling ^{and} Nepal Terai) called Sannyasīs and in collaboration with the Bhutiyās continued attack in the territory of Koch Bihar and East India Company's properties.

Captain Stuart was sent to subdue the rising. He defeated both Darpadeva and the Sannyasīs and took possession of the town of Jalpaiguri.¹⁰¹ Partly Chiefs like the Raikats of Baikantapura were virtually independent and made a bid to

settle old scores by capturing the metropolis, Cooch Behar'.¹⁰² The king of Koch Behar who sought the help of the British was instructed by the latter to remain firm in their allegiance to the British Government, who, on the other hand, bound themselves to assist the Rājā with troops whenever he might require them for the defence of the country, ^{provided that} the Rājā ^{would} bear the expense. Captain Jones with a small force of Sepoys then proceeded to Koch Bihar, dispossessed the Bhutanese, and pursuing them to the hills compelled them to make terms with the British Government. A Treaty¹⁰³ was concluded with Bhutan in 1774 and in accordance with one of its articles Rājā Dhanendranārāyana was released from confinement.

In settling the frontier, great favour have been shown to the Bhutiyas probably with a view to gaining their friendship for commercial advantages.

Koch Relations with the Ahoms and the Mughals

According to the Darrang Rājavanśāvalī¹⁰⁴ Visvasinha led an invasion of the Ahom territory,¹⁰⁵ but was compelled to retreat due to hardships experienced during the journey and difficulty for obtaining supplies.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, a few Burmese inform us that Ahom King Suhungmung sent in 1533 A.D. an army in aid of one fugitive Kāmata king (whose name has not been mentioned) in order to re-instate him in his own kingdom.¹⁰⁷ After establishing him, the Bargohain (i.e.

Commander-in-Chief) advanced as far as the Karatoyā river where their commander is said to have erected a temple and dug a tank.¹⁰⁸

It is most probable that on his way back to Assam from this expedition, the Ahom General marched against Visvasimha who acknowledged the supremacy of the Ahom King and gave various presents to the Bargohain. As Visvasimha's power was not consolidated, he found no other alternative than to tender his submission to the Ahom king without fighting.¹⁰⁹ Visvasimha is said to have led an invasion of the Ahom kingdom in 1537 A.D. But before a battle was fought, he was probably compelled to abandon the expedition due to various difficulties. He established friendship with the Ahom King Suhungmung by exchanging presents.¹¹⁰ Gait, however, observes, 'The Ahom Chronicles merely relate that in 1537 A.D. he (i.e. Visvasimha) paid a friendly visit to the Ahom king and exchanged presents with him'.¹¹¹

During his reign there were hostilities more than once between the Ahoms and the Muhammadans and it is possible that Visvasimha played a significant part in driving out the Muhammadans from Kamarūpa, although no account of such warfare fought by Visvasimha against the Mughals is available.¹¹²

In course of his fight against the Ahoms Naranārāyaṇa, son and successor of Visvasimha along with his brother Śukladhvaja (alias Cilārāi) advanced through Goalpara and Kamarūpa over a road called Gohain Kamala Āli built by Gohain Kamal,¹¹³ another

son, ^{of} Visvasimha. The Koch army fought a fierce battle on the bank of the river Dikrāl or Dihong and Darrang Rāja Varisāvalī states that the battle lasted for seven days and ended in the defeat of the Ahoms. ¹¹⁴ It has been suggested by Gait that Koch army was afterwards defeated by the Ahoms under Suklengmung who entrenched himself on the bank of the pichalā river and cut off their supplies. ¹¹⁵

This defeat led to a cessation of hostilities for some years. In 1555 A.D. Naranārāyaṇa sent six envoys [Infra, Appendix I (Administration)] to the Ahom King Sukhāmpā, Khorā Rājā (1552-1603 A.D.) with presents and a letter referring to the old friendship existed between Visvasimha, his father and the Ahom king, Suhungmung (1497-1539 A.D.). He desired to maintain similar friendship with the Ahom ruler. In his letter, however, he regretted for murder of the three Koch princes viz., Dīp Simha, Hemadhara and Rāmacandra. ¹¹⁶

Bargohāin who received the envoys on behalf of the king remarked that there was nothing wrong in the murder of the Koch princes in a battle, since this was in agreement with the practices among the Kṣatriyas. ¹¹⁷

He (Bargohāin) considered the articles brought by the ambassadors as most ordinary. In his reply, the Ahom king wrote that he was happy to learn that Koch King has mentioned about cordial relation that subsisted between them. The Ahom King indicated that he would remain as cordial as he was before.

Lastly, he mentioned about the articles despatched to him and said a bit sarcastically that such things would (naturally) appear proper to those who were accustomed to use them. The Ahom King in return sent two pieces of Nara cloth, four elephant tusks, two ganthian (fragrant roots of a tree) along with a letter to the Koch king Naranārāyaṇa.¹¹⁸

Having received a detailed report from the envoys after their return from Ahom kingdom and the letter from the Ahom King, Naranārāyaṇa proceeded to prepare for war. In 1562 the King along with his brother Cilarāi marched against the Ahoms. On the way the Bhuyān Chiefs acknowledged the supremacy of the Koch king. The Bhutiyās and the Daflās also offered their submission and joined the ranks of the Koch army.¹¹⁹ Śuklādhvaja (Cilarāi) planned to attack Assam simultaneously by land and river. A large flotilla of boats under the naval Commanders Bhaktamālā and Tepu advanced by river and a force of fifty two thousands men by land route under the Generals Bhunvala and Vāhuvala pātra. In a naval engagement on the mouth of the river Dikṣu the Ahoms were defeated.¹²⁰ It is interesting to note that the infantry of the Koches under Cilarāi came upto Nārāyaṇapura. In such a critical situation, the Ahoms dressed up their soldiers as Brāhmaṇas, each wearing a sacred thread and seated on a cow. They knew that the Koches did not kill Brāhmaṇas and cows. Cilarāi, considering them to be real Brāhmaṇas desisted from the war.¹²¹ Later on, he understood the real motive and advanced with a strong force

upto the capital of Gadgaon in 1563 A.D. War ensued between the Koches and the Ahoms. Ultimately the capital Gadgaon fell into the hands of the Koches. The Ahom monarch had to retire to the hilly forests of Namarupa and to sue for peace.¹²² A considerable tract north of the Brahmaputra was ceded to Naranarayana and a good number of sons of some nobles were given to Gilarai as hostages. A heavy war indemnity was also paid to the Koch king.¹²³

However, the Ahom king came back to his capital and took vigorous steps to restore his position. After a short while, places like Narayanapura and Sala were re-occupied and two forts were erected there.¹²⁴

We have already noticed that Naranarayana did not stop his conquest with only vanquishing the Ahoms. He led military campaigns against many other royal dynasties of eastern India and as a result of that Koch Bihar became the most powerful kingdom in Eastern India in the later half of the 16th century.

Most of the Yaisavalis and Assam Buraonis narrate that the attack on Gauḍa by Naranarayana was made after the conquest of the Ahom territory and before the construction of the temple of Kamakhya (1566 A.D.). It has been suggested that Naranarayana attacked Gauḍa in retaliation of the destruction¹²⁵ of the temple of Kamakhya, although the Nilacala inscription of Sukladhvaja¹²⁶ does not give us any indication of the rebuilding of the temple, nor this event has been supported by any Muhammadan historian. Some, however, described this venture of Naranarayana

as an expression of his ambition for the expansion of his authority further west. We, however, know very little about the details of the Gauda king Sulaimān Kaṛṇi's encounter with Naranārāyaṇa, which, in its outlines at least, appears to be a genuine historical episode. It is said that the Koch army was defeated and Sukladvaja, the Koch Commander-in-Chief was made captive. But the victory obtained by Sulaimān Kaṛṇi was to all intents and purposes a pyrrhic victory.¹²⁷ The exigency of such a situation influenced Naranārāyaṇa to make friendship with the Ahoms, particularly when he got a letter secretly sent to him by his brother Cilārāi advising him to obtain friendship of the Ahom king by releasing the Ahom hostages and to avert an attack from them (i.e., the Ahoms). Naranārāyaṇa accordingly decided to release the Ahom hostages who were brought to Koch Capital in 1563 A.D. But he made a good deal of plan to conceal his real motive by arranging a dice-play with Sundara Gosāin, the leader of the hostages, so that Naranārāyaṇa's weakness could not be exposed to the Ahom king. The king played with Sundara Gosāin and willingly courted defeat. He then released the hostages according to the terms of the aforesaid game.¹²⁸

A similar manner appears to have been adopted by Sulaimān Kaṛṇi with the help of his mother, who with a show of her motherly affections to Cilārāi, brought about his immediate release. Because the Bengal Sultan also was eager for making friendship with the ruler of the Kāmata-Koch Kingdom

in order to face a threat of invasion from the Mughal conquerors of Delhi. ¹²⁹

It is said that inspite of abovementioned friendship between Koch king and the Ahoms, Naranārāyaṇa sent a fresh naval expedition under Teṇu, ¹³⁰ to effect recovery of the territories like Nārāyaṇapura and Sālā which were recovered by the Ahom king Svargadeva immediately after Naranārāyaṇa's departure from there in ^{later} his earlier campaign as given above. The Koches were defeated with loss of soldiers, many ships, guns and other things. ¹³¹ The attack was renewed and an intense fighting took place between the two parties on the mouth of river Dhānsiri (Nāntimā) in which the Koches were defeated. With that victory the Ahoms reinstated their position on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river. ¹³²

During Sulaimān's Koch enterprise, Bengal was open to threat from the Delhi Emperor. And Mughal authority was established in Bengal on the ruins of the pāthān rule and with their appearance there opened a new era in the history of Muhammadan relation with Kāmarūpa and Kāmātā-Koch Kingdom. Naranārāyaṇa realised the necessity of making friendship with the Mughals and thus sent an emissary in 1574 A.D. to Akbar's Court with various presents and also refused asylum to the Afghan rebel, Mankālī of Ghoraghāt. ¹³³ The Mughal Emperor appears to have been highly pleased by this friendly gesture on the part of the

Koch king and heartily reciprocated it. A peaceful and defensive alliance (1578 A.D.) was established on equal terms between Koch Bihar and Mughal India.¹³⁴ As regards this treaty S.N. Bhattacharyya,¹³⁵ rightly observes, "the distracted political condition of Bengal in general, and of Ghoraghat region in particular, explains to a great extent the pacific disposition of the Mughal Emperor towards Koch Bihar. The necessity of maintaining good relations with the Koch King, in order to deprive the Afghan rebels and the disaffected Imperial officers of a safe asylum in his state, must have been brought home to Akbar". Naranārāyaṇa also considered it as a good defence against the Ahoms.

The Koch king is said to have sent his own war-boats in aid of Mughals in 1583 A.D. in pursuance of the newly concluded treaty. In November of the same year, there was an insurrection led by Maṣūm Kābuli in the vicinity of Tandā. The Koch navy co-operated with the war-boats of the qaqshāls on the banks of the Ganges in suppressing the rebel Maṣūm Kābuli who ultimately fled to Bhāti through Ghoraghat.¹³⁶

About this time an event occurred, which greatly affected the history of the Kāmata-Koch Kingdom and also served to give a new turn to the Mughal North-East frontier policy. It is the division of the state into two parts and subsequent emergence of two independent kingdoms i.e. Kāmata-Koch Kingdom to the ^{west} east of the Sankōṣa under Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa and Kāmārūpa kingdom under Raghudeva to the ^{east} west of the said river.¹³⁷

During the reign of Naranārāyaṇa, Raghudeva acted as the governor of the territory to the east of Sankosa, although, as noted above, he (i.e. Raghudeva) assumed the title Kamarūnēsvara in the Hayagriva Temple Inscription at Hājo.

~~As Mahārāja Naranārāyaṇa demanded tribute~~

After the death of Naranārāyaṇa, Raghudeva fought with his son Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa. Raja Raghudeva was defeated, and he returned to his territory, leaving behind his umbrella at Bihar. Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa detained this insignia of royalty as a souvenir of his victory over Raghudeva. The defeated prince now conferred with his kinsmen, Sil Khān, Fateh Khān, the king's son-in-law, Purandara Lakṣara, Nitāl Candra Nāzir, Thākur Panthananda, Kavindrapātra, Gadādhara Barua and other Barās and Buruks and then made preparations for an invasion of ^{Kāmati-Koch} Bihar. 138

He formed an alliance with Iṣā Khān, the enemy of Mughals, as a counterpoise to Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa's treaty of friendship¹³⁹ with the Mughal Emperor and decided on an expedition to west of the Bāhirband parganāh from the Koch Bihar kingdom.

It appears that Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa, as we have discussed earlier, offered formal submission to the Mughal sovereign at his meeting with Rājā Mānsiṅha in 1596 at a place called Anandapura near Ghoraghāt.¹⁴⁰ Raghudeva attacked Bāhirband (then in the kingdom of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa) and captured it.¹⁴¹

At this hour of crisis Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa appealed to Rājā Mān Siṃha for help. The latter took the earliest opportunity to nip the neo-Koch-Afghan alliance in the bud. Accordingly, Mān Siṃha sent a chosen force under two Afghan generals and in fierce battle that ensued Raghudeva was defeated and compelled to leave Bāhirband. ¹⁴²

In 1597 A.D. Raghudeva as noted earlier made extensive plans to attack Kāmatā with Masūm Khān and Īsā Khān Kābuli. When the Mughal General Durjan Siṃha joined Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa the combined Mughals and Kāmatā forces were routed in the battle of Katrabhū. The imperial admiral Durjan Siṃha, son of Mān Siṃha, was slain with many other soldiers including Koch Pāiks. Some men were taken prisoners and some escaped. ¹⁴³

After the death of Raghudeva, his son Parīkṣit-nārāyaṇa became king of Kāmarūpa and he also following in his father's footsteps, annexed the Bāhirband ^{parganāh.} ~~parganāh.~~ Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa went to war with him but was defeated. ¹⁴⁴

The Captive Kārjis bowed down to Parīkṣit. ¹⁴⁵ During that time Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa sought help from the Ahom king and, being refused, solicited the assistance of the Mughals in subduing the refractory Parīkṣit.

The Mughal viceroy Islām Khān, however, promised help on condition that he completely surrendered to the Mughals.

Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa submitted to the Mughals by agreeing to pay tribute to the Emperor and his submission sounded the deathknell of the independent kingdom of Koch Bihar. ¹⁴⁶ Parīksit had meanwhile arrested and detained the members of the family of Raghunāth, zamīndar of Susang, a feudatory of the mughals and the latter lodged complaints to Islām Khān of Parīksit's highhandedness. ¹⁴⁷

On the prospect of ruling over the United realms of Koch Bihar and Kāmarūpe, on the fall of Parīksit, Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa induced Mughal viceroy to attack his ^(Parīksit's) realm and ^{agreed} gladly offered to render personal service in an attack on the latter's state. ¹⁴⁸ The Mughal viceroy in an attempt to subjugate Kāmarūpa, immediately responded to this suggestion of the Koch King, ¹⁴⁹ and accordingly sent a large army against Parīksit, in the winter of 1612. The Mughal campaign lasted for about nine months (C. November, 1612 to July, 1613) and ended in the conquest of Parīksit's kingdom. ¹⁵⁰

Islām Khān despatched a large army under the leadership of Shykh Kamāl and the guidance of Rājā Raghunāth, while the Chief Command was given to Mukarram Khān. ¹⁵¹ In fulfilment of his promise, Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa rendered good service to the Mughals. ¹⁵² Soon after the capture of Parīksit's great stronghold of Dhubri (C April, 1613) ¹⁵³ the regions of Bhitārband and Bahīrband were brought under control by Mīrṣā Nathan and the Zamīndars surrendered to him and presented

themselves before the imperial officers according to the orders of Mīrzā Nathan, ¹⁵⁴ Parīksit being defeated at Dhubri sued for peace, ¹⁵⁵ Nawab Islām Khān demanded his submission in person as well as the ^{cession} cession of Hājo to the Mughals, ¹⁵⁶

Parīksitnārāyana now found to the Ahom king Pratāp Siṃha for assistance to which the latter agreed on condition that the Koch Prince would undertake to rule on the north bank allowing the Ahoms to rule on the south, ¹⁵⁷ Parīksit did not agree to the proposal and continued his hostilities single handed. In 1614, he was once more attacked by the Mughals and Lakṣmīnārāyana, ^{asid} he surrendered himself with all his possessions, ¹⁵⁸ As to the cause of hostility, the native chronicles, are almost unanimous in referring to the Kāmarūpa king's relentless aggressions against Lakṣmīnārāyana, ¹⁵⁹ We have, however, noticed earlier that Lakṣmīnārāyana also had an ambition for ruling over the United Koch territory.

Parīksit was then taken to Dacca from where he was sent to Delhi. At this stage, Ibrāhīm Khān Fathjang pleaded with the Emperor Jahāngir to restore him (Parīksit) to his kingdom after he had paid the promised sum of seven lakhs of rupees (probably as war indemnity), ¹⁶⁰ The life of the Kāmarūpa King, subsequent to his release, however, appears to have been obscure. It may be said that the disappearance of the Kāmarūpa monarchy and its subsequent absorption in the Mughal Empire brought 'the Ahom State within the pace of Mughal foreign policy, which now attained full scope in the north-eastern frontier'.

We learn from the Bahārīstān-i-Ghaybī that Mukarram Khān, the Chief Commander of the Mughals wrote to his brother 'Abdu's-Salām to come to Gilhanay, placing Laksmīnārāyana in the administration of the ^{conquered} territory of Kāmarūpa. ¹⁶¹ Laksmīnārāyana was then staying near Khantaghāt, 'Abdu's-Salām sent Rājā Raghunāth to bring Laksmīnārāyana before him with the assurance that he would be invested with the territory of Kāmarūpa. Laksmīnārāyana also thought that his position in the territory of Kāmarūpa would be confirmed. Rājā Raghunāth came and consoled the Rājā ^(Laksmīnārāyana) with encouraging words and afterwards Laksmīnārāyana was brought to Qāsim Khān, the Bengal Governor. ¹⁶² And the king Laksmīnārāyana was kept under surveillance under the orders of the Bengal Subadar. ¹⁶³

An uprising was witnessed in Koch Bihar and Kāmarūpa following confinement of both the kings : Parīksitnārāyana and Laksmīnārāyana. ¹⁶⁴ A strong detachment was sent from the new headquarters at Jahāngīrābād to put down the revolt. A fortified post was installed at Dalgāon and from there the Mughal army moved to Gumā Duar (occupying the western part of Parīksit's realm).

The army then crossed the river Sankosa and entered into the Koch Kingdom. The fort of Jaipur to the north-east of the Koch Capital was full of jungles and was the stronghold of the rebels. Naturally, the Imperialist army attacked the fort and stormed it. The Imperialist army and cavalry

successfully put down the rebellions altogether (1614 A.D.).¹⁶⁵

In 1617 Ibrāhīm Khān replaced Qāsim Khān as Subādār of Bengal and at his intervention Emperor Jahāngīr set Lakṣmīnārāyana free and gave him among others, an 'Irāqī horse, a magnificent elephant, a turki horse, a special sword and a jewelled rosary.¹⁶⁶ But he was not in a position to rule the country of Koch Bihar once again. On his return he was sent by the Subādār to Kāmarūpa to help the Mughals in controlling the revolts and administration of Kāmarūpa. He remained in Hājo and engaged on the emperor's behalf upto 1626 A.D. He probably died in 1627 A.D.¹⁶⁷

Lakṣmīnārāyana also aided the Mughal administration in the task of gradual consolidation of their authority in Uttarkula and Dakhinkula regions. He appears to have placed his troops at the disposal of his colleagues, particularly Mīrṣā Nathan, the thānādār of Dakhinkula, with whom he was on friendly terms.

At the time of encounters with king Balīnārāyana in 1619 and again in 1620, Lakṣmīnārāyana is said to have assisted the thānādār Mīrṣā Nathan with large contingents of troops in each time.¹⁶⁸

The advent of the rebellious Prince Shāhjahān in Bengal and the defeat and destruction of Subādār Ibrāhīm Khān Fathjang at the hands of his victorious army created confusion in Kāmarūpa and affected the fortune of the Koch King

Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa who had continued to stay at Hājo. Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa along with Mīrzā Nathan and other prominent local officers is said to have gone over to the side of victorious rebels forsaking the cause of lawful Emperor Jahāngīr.¹⁶⁹ Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa, however, received a farman in commemoration of his services to the rebel cause.¹⁷⁰

After Shāh Jahān's defeat at the battle of Tons in November, 1624, Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa went back to the side of Jahāngīr and continued to stay at Hājo.¹⁷¹

Vīṅhārāyaṇa, son of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa had carried on the administration of Koch Bihar as heir-apparent¹⁷² during 'honourable' exile at Hājo after his release from Delhi, apparently under his father's instruction. It is said that he ascended the throne of Kāmata-Koch Kingdom after his father's death in 1627. Recently a few full and half Nārāyaṇī coins of the time of Vīṅhārāyaṇa have discovered.¹⁷³ Vīṅhārāyaṇa died in c 1632. Though he was not a very competent administrator, but he appears to have patronised the cause of learning and education in his kingdom.¹⁷⁴ It is most likely that he continued to pay tributes to the Mughal emperor.

While the Emperor Shāhjahān cultivated a policy of peace, harmony and goodwill with Koch Bihar he continued a policy of unabated hostility towards the kingdom of Kāmarūpa. It has been suggested that the vassal state of Koch Bihar commanded the line of communications with Bengal. 'The Mughals could hardly fail to realise that in the almost incessant conflict

with the most powerful Mongoloid state, as Assam was, a friendly and contended Koch power was the best guarantee for the imperial success'.¹⁷⁵

When Prānanārāyaṇa became king of Kāmātā-Koch Kingdom, he was in no mood to deviate from the path of traditional loyalty. The Mughals in Bengal too, were then fully preoccupied with their own problems. Hardly had the Europeans in Hughly been put down, the imperial authority in Kāmṛūpa was seriously challenged by the wily Rājā Balinārāyaṇa of Darrang, aided by the Assam (i. e. Ahom) king.

Prānanārāyaṇa readily responded to the appeal of Islām Khān to help him in his campaign against Balinārāyaṇa and the Assamese (1636-38). He joined the imperial army with a detachment of his own troops. At first they suffered a series of reverses; their commander was captured, and the fortified thanas, including Hājo, fell into the hands of the enemy. With the arrival of re-inforcement from the Bengal Subandār, they slowly recovered their lost ground. The tide of fortune soon turned back; the Assamese gradually got the better of the invaders again, and Prānanārāyaṇa along with his Mughal ally was compelled to retreat down the Brahmaputra.¹⁷⁶

After their victory the Ahoms reoccupied Kajali, but the continuous warfare made a great loss to the Ahom resources and thus the Ahoms looked for a treaty with the Mughals and the

latter also desired the same at that moment. It is said that a treaty was concluded between the two parties.¹⁷⁷ As a result of the treaty, the Mughals got the territory west of the Badnadi on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and the Asurar Ali on the south bank, while the Ahoms' possession of the rest of the kingdom formerly ruled by Pariksit (i.e. the country between Badnadi and Bhoroli rivers) was left undisturbed.¹⁷⁸

The long-drawn warfare, however, soon came to an end. For about twenty years to come, there was no open conflict between the Mughals and the Assamese. Prānanārāyaṇa during this interval engaged himself in various activities and his multiferous cultural pursuits. He continued in his path of loyalty and faithfulness till the war of succession among the sons of Shāh Jahān and paved the way for a new chapter in Koch Mughal history. Prānanārāyaṇa, however, realised the futility of siding with the Mughals against the Ahoms. He decided to restore friendliness with the Ahom king Jayadvaja Simha and sent to him an envoy named Gokul Chandra for ensuring peace.¹⁷⁹ But the Ahom king did not welcome the proposal as he remembered of the previous happenings.

Prānanārāyaṇa is said to have initiated a further move for reconciliation with the Ahom king through mediation of one Banamālī Gosāin of Madhupura (within Koch Bihar), a former resident of Assam.¹⁸⁰

In 1657 A.D. the Mughal Emperor fell seriously ill. At this, an internecine quarrel began among his four sons for the

throne of Delhi. Chaos and confusion prevailed in the Mughal empire.

Taking advantage of the weak state of the Mughal frontier in the north-east, Prānanārāyana now openly bade defiance to the Mughals, stopped payment of tribute and set himself up as an independent ruler.¹⁸¹

The king (i.e. Prānanārāyana) also made overtures to Durlabhanārāyana, Zamindar of Budhanagara and a vassal of the Mughal Emperor, to make common cause with him in overthrowing alien government in Kāmrūpa. But Durlabhanārāyana did not listen to it and as a result of which the king sent his minister-general Bhabanāth Kārji to capture Durlabhanārāyana who, however, fled to the court of the Ahom King.¹⁸²

As a result of this, most of the territories under jurisdiction of the kingdom of Koch Hājo went to Prānanārāyana. Mir Lutfullāh Shivāji, the Mughal Faujdar of Kāmarūpa (Koch Hājo) sent his son to oppose Bhabanāth Kārji. But the Mughal army was defeated and had to retreat to Gauhati. At this juncture, the Ahoms also assembled a vast army, threw two bridges over the Kalang and proceeded towards Gauhati.¹⁸³ Mir Lutfullāh being hardpressed from both sides, left Gauhati. The Ahoms then took over the charge of Gauhati, Pāndu and Sarālgāt in February, 1659,¹⁸⁴ while the Koches took possession of Hājo.

Prānanārāyana sent his minister Bhabanāth Kārji to

the Ahom king for an offensive and defensive alliance against the Mughals. The Ahom king rejecting the belated Koch proposal, decisively defeated the Koch army near Hājo and then compelled Bhabanāth Kārji to vacate the place and to go beyond the Manās by the month of March, 1660. ¹⁸⁵

Prānanārāyana had an ambition to effect recovery of the ancestral dominion to the east of river Sankosa in Kāmarūpa. But that idea was becoming a day dream at a time particularly when he was confronted to manifold troubles arising out of the denial of the Mughal suzerainty, the loss of sympathy of his near relatives and the quarrel with the neighbouring Ahom Kingdom.

Rājā Prānanārāyana now appeared once again on the scene, and attacked the brother of the Mughal commandant of Kāmarūpa who had taken refuge in Dhubri. The latter fled, but the Ahoms soon ousted him from Dhubri, which was then occupied by them. In an engagement at Fort 'Kunga', the Koches were defeated and were soon driven across the Sankosa to their own kingdom, leaving Kāmarūpa at the mercy of Ahoms, who soon stretched their power upto Hāsilah. ¹⁸⁶

As Governor of Bengal Mirjumla wanted to chastise the insubordinate rulers of Kamatā Koch kingdom and Assam in the cause of maintaining imperial prestige and securing safety of the Imperial dominions. By the Mughal-Ahom treaty of 1639 western Assam from Gauhati to the Manās river had passed under the Mughals.

The accession of Aurangzeb and the appointment of Mirjumla as the governor of Bengal (June 1660)¹⁸⁷ naturally indicated that the punishment of Koch and Ahom rulers was inevitable.

It is believed that Mir Jumla was prompted not only by imperialistic designs, but as his trusted Waqi'a-navis tells us - also by a desire for, 'a holy war with the infidels of Assam.....'¹⁸⁸

It appears that both the Koch and the Ahom kings longed for peace. But these overtures of peace appeared only a clever means on the part of kings of Assam and Koch Bihar to gain time for completion of preparations. Rashid Khan who was deputed by Mir Jumla to take delivery of Kāmarūpa from the Ahoms had to halt at Rāngāmāti before advancing further against the well-equipped Ahoms. Rājā Sujān Singh, who was also deputed against the Koches could not advance beyond Ekdār in 1661 owing to the advent of the rainy season.¹⁸⁹

Resolving to conduct the war in person, and to take the revenge first against Koch Bihar, and then against Assam Mir Jumla made several administrative arrangements in Bengal before setting out on the expedition.¹⁹⁰

There were three routes to the territory of Prānanārāyaṇa. Of these, two routes¹⁹¹ had been blocked (by the defenders) in various ways, but due to shortage of time

and a (false) sense of security owing to its overgrown trees and difficult passes, the inhabitants had not protected the third route. And this route passed through thick jungles full of snakes and of poisonous trees, that raised their heads to the sky. Mir Jumla selected this unfrequented route.¹⁹²

At the news of advance of the Imperial general together with Sujan Sinha near the ai or embankment, the boundary of Koch Bihar, the Koch soldiers fled away (13th Dec., 1661 A.D.).¹⁹³ At the instruction of Mir Jumla, Saiyyid made complete prohibitory regulations so that no soldier could resort to any harrassment to the inhabitants of the place and the violation of the said promulgation would amount to deterrent punishment. Thus Mir Jumla tried to pacify the people and to secure the property of poor people.¹⁹⁴ The Rājā in the meantime fled to Kānthālbāri at the foot of the hills of Bhutan and the minister went to Morāng.¹⁹⁵

The Kingdom was annexed to the Mughal empire, coins were struck in Aurangzeb's name, and the name of the city was changed to Alanginagara.¹⁹⁶ It appears from the account of Shihābuddin Tālish that Mir Jumla after installing Isfandiyyār Beg to garrison the capital of Kāmātā-Koch Kingdom, he proceeded to conquer the territory of Assam in 1662 A.D. But Mughals could not remain in the Koch territory for long.

It is said that after the departure of Mir Jumla the Mughal officers sought to introduce an innovation in the

time-honoured Land revenue system of the country. This system, however, was not accepted by the local people who ultimately rose into rebellion. The imperial garrison at the capital city was in danger with advent of the rains, the Mughal army in Assam was reduced to a precarious condition. During this period of confusion, the Koch king came back to his capital and was given a warm welcome by his subjects.

The Imperial officer at Kānthālbāri was killed, and all supplies to the garrison at the capital were cut off. As a result, Isfandiyār compelled to leave Koch Capital and fled to Ghoreghāt. Askarkhān reached there but was unable to recover the country.¹⁹⁷

Thus the foreign domination was now removed, and Koch Bihar again got back its independence in 1661. The plans of Mir Jumla to recover it proved to be futile.

Askar Khān was instructed by Mir Jumla to renew the attack to recover Koch Kingdom as the King Prānanārāyana failed in keeping his engagements and paying tribute.¹⁹⁸ But a ~~small~~ great change came in the Bengal Government at the death of Mir Jumla. His successor Daud Khān, officiating Viceroy of Bengal could not send a strong reinforcement which was urgent at that moment. 'All that Askar Khān was able to do was, "to confirm his possession of the Chakla of Fathpur outside the wall (al) of Koch Bihar, which had been seized by the Mughals early in the war".¹⁹⁹

The next Viceroy Shaistā Khān appointed in 1664 wanted to make a successful conclusion of the half-finished work of Mir Jumla. In the month of March, the new Sūbadār reached Rājmahala and designed to conquer the territory of Koch Bihar on his way to the capital.²⁰⁰

Prānanārāyana's last days, as noticed earlier, were in numerous problems and he thought it wise to offer submission to the Mughal Emperor in order to save his kingdom. He had to pay a sum of rupees five lakhs and a half in a few instalments to the Bengal Viceroy as war indemnity. Shaistā-Khān, on his part, had a plan to attack Arākān. The terms offered by the Koch king appeared to the Bengal Sūbadār as welcoming, particularly prior to such a venture. The Mughal army accordingly was ordered to withdraw from Koch frontier as soon as the instalments of money were paid.²⁰¹ Thus after a short spell of independence, Koch Bihar once again turned into a vassal state.

Both the Koch and the Ahom kings realised the necessity of friendship between them particularly after their defeats at the hands of Mir Jumla. Had there been any united move against the Mughal invader Mirjumla, the results of the war might have been different. Prānanārāyana was thus said to have sent a messenger to the Ahom king Jayadhaja Simha in February, 1663 enquiring after his welfare.²⁰² The defeat of both the parties by Mir Jumla thus put an end to the traditional hostility between the two kingdoms since the days of the Koch king Naranārāyana (1555-1587 A.D.)

Prānanārāyana is said to have made two more attempts at obtaining friendship with the Ahom kings - one by sending a letter to the Rājā Sasur Rāj Mantri or Prime Minister of Jayadvaja Simha along with letter to the ~~Ahom King~~ and the other by sending one Rāmacandra Katakī (i. e. envoy) to Cakradhvaja Simha about the middle of 1664 A.D. informing him of the news that the Mughals were enjoying his wealth and capturing elephants in the forests.²⁰³ The Koch king in his letter to Jayadvaja Simha praised the political wisdom of the Ahom king and requested him to consolidate friendly relations between them. In his reply, the Ahom king referred to the long existing friendship since the days of Visvasimha. He communicated his desire to make a common cause in making a joint attack against the Mughals.

Chakradhvaja also replied to Prānanārāyana regretting for the aforesaid loss at the hands of the Mughals and suggested him to tide over the problem.²⁰⁴ It is interesting to note that both Cakradhvaja Simha and Prānanārāyana were prepared to fight with the Mughals. Cakradhvaja Simha in a letter addressed to Prānanārāyana in February, 1666 welcomed the latter for supplying the Ahom king with the news that some of the provincial Governors had risen against Aurangzeb, and that the Prānanārāyana had made preparations to attack the Mughals.²⁰⁵

After a few months Prānanārāyana died and his son Modanārāyana also continued the friendship with the Ahoms. The

Koch king sent two envoys named Nanda and Bhima with a letter addressed to the Ahom ruler in January, 1667.²⁰⁶ Prior to this in 1666 A.D. Rāmacaraṇa and Bhaktacaraṇa, the Koch emissaries were sent to the Ahom king who received them cordially but on their way back, they were said to have been killed by the Gāros of the Pānbāriā Rājā (under the supervision of the Delhi emperor).²⁰⁷

In 1667, Cakradhvaja Siṃha before his attack on the Mughals at Gauhati sent a letter to the Koch King requesting him to make a simultaneous attack on the Mughals in the border areas.²⁰⁸

However, despite his friendly relation with the Ahoms, the Koch king Modanārāyaṇa was said to have assisted the Mughal army of Rāma Siṃha in his invasion of Assam by supplying 15,000 archers. A few officers viz. Kavikisore Baruā, Sarveśvara Baruā, Manmatha Baruā and Ghenasīyama Baksī from Koch Bihar, led this army.²⁰⁹

King Mahīndranārāyaṇa is also said to have made an attempt to revive the friendship with the Ahoms. He wrote a letter to Garhgayan Sandikoi Barphukan of Gauhati conveying the news that the son of the Bengal Nawab had come to him with many presents in order to effect an alliance with the Mughals and to mediate between the Mughals and the Ahoms. But the king (i.e. Mahīndranārāyaṇa) himself could not accept the proposal, as the Mughals had demanded ten lacs of rupees as war indemnity from the Ahoms. The Koch king rather stressed upon the

friendship between the two kingdoms and branded the Mughals as their common enemy. The Koch king further suggested the Barphukan to attack Mughal garrison at Rāngāmāti taking permission from the Ahom king and then to proceed to Dhākā via Ghoraghat.²¹⁰ It is presumed that the above letter of Koch king might have written by his ministers in his name because Mahīndranārāyana was only five years old when he ascended the throne as suggested by S.N. Bhattacharyya.²¹¹

During his period an invasion by Bhabānī Dāsa, son of Todar Mal is stated to have launched a campaign against Koch Bihar. But the Chatra Nāzir Yajñanārāyana with the help of the Dharmarāja (spiritual head) of Bhutan repulsed the attack of the Mughals and suppressed the internal turmoil.²¹² The Koch king appraised the Ahom Barphukan of the happenings and requested him to attack the Mughal garrison at Rāngāmāti. He also stated that the Mughals were searching for an opportunity to attack Assam. In his reply, Barphukan expressed his sorrow for the discomfiture of the Koch King. This letter, however, could not reach Koch Bihar for some difficulties.²¹³

Rūpanārāyana (1704-1714 A.D.) also came into contact with the Ahom kingdom. He also wished to exchange friendliness between Koch Bihar and Assam. In reply to the letter of Barphukan in May, 1714 A.D. Rūpanārāyana wrote to him that the envoys could not be sent to him owing to bad communication.

During his reign period, the relation between the

Koch king and the Mughal Faujdar was not at all cordial. S.H. Askari supplies us with a good number of interesting letters appeared to have been written by Ali quli Khān, the Faujdar of Koch Bihar²¹⁴ who acted during the period of Azim-us-Shah's vice-royalty of the eastern provinces. The letters addressed to the Viceroy by the Faujdar, inform us regarding the relation as existed between the Mughals and the Koch people in the first quarter of the 18th century A.D. The contents of the letters No. 2, 5, 7, 10, 13, 20, 25, 26, 31 and 65 reveal two things : one that the Faujdar was sincerely following the instructions of the 'Huzur'(i.e., the Viceroy) from time to time. It included the imposition of imperial orders or prohibitions as well as the punishment meted out to the miscreants of the refractory Koch people who, at the connivance of the Afghan Chiefs often created disturbance to administering the Sarkar Bihar by the Mughal Faujdar Ali quli Khān and his deputy Afrasyah.

The other thing which emanates from the above letters is that the Mughal hold on Koch Bihar was not very strong. It is evident from these letters that the Faujdar of Sarkar Koch Bihar required more money, force, food-stuffs, war-equipments in order to combat the evil designers who attempted to oust the Mughals from the region. The Faujdar repeatedly mentioned of the grudge fomenting among their soldiers for non-payment of arrear dues. Thus the Faujdar appealed to the

higher authority for providing him with sufficient money and re-inforcement. However, it speaks of its victory, particularly in reducing the strength of the rebels. Ali Quli Khān credited himself for undertaking different hazardous ventures producing immense fruit even advancing near the Koch Bihar Territory, although it could not be finally brought under subjugation.

We learn that Rūpanārāyana, the Koch king became engaged in war with the Faujdar of Rangpur.²¹⁵ An intense fight took place between the Mughals and Rūpanārāyana along with the Pāthān chiefs. But in course of continual war the Koch Bihar army was being exterminated. As such, the Koch king concluded a treaty with Nawab of Bengal. The possession of three Chāklās of Bodā, Pātgrāma and Pūrvabhāga were given to the Koch Bihar king while, Chāklās of Kājir Hāt, Kārinā and Fatepur were included within the Imperial dominions.²¹⁶

However, the treaty provisions were not accepted by the Mughal authorities. The terms of the treaty were changed (1713 A.D.) and the Mughal got possession over the Chāklās of Bodā, Pātgrāma and Pūrvabhāga.²¹⁷ It is interesting to note that Rūpanārāyana sent an ambassador with a nazar and peshkash²¹⁸ to Murshid Quli Khān who appointed to the joint offices of the Sūbadār and the Dewān. This friendly relation with the Bengal Sūbadār continued during the period of his son Upendranārāyana (1714-1763 A.D.). But it did not exist during the tenure of the next incumbent.²¹⁹

Notes and References

- 1 H.N. Dutta Barua (Ed.), Guru Garits, Nalbari, 1955, pp. 11-23;
Gunabhiram
H. Barua, Assam Bharsili, Gauhati, 1972, Reprint, pp. 35-38;
On the basis of the Bāro Bhuyān legends which mentions Durlabhanārāyana as a Rājā of Kāmata, Gait also observed that Durlabhanārāyana ~~was~~ ~~seem~~ seemed to have ruled at the end of the thirteenth century over the country between Badnadi and the Karatoya. See A History of Assam, p.44.
- 2 N.N. Acharyya, The History of Medieval Assam, New Delhi, Reprint, 1984, p. 158.
- 3 H.N. Dutta Barua, op.cit., p. 16.
- 4 N.N. Acharyya, op.cit., p. 157.
- 5 H.N. Dutta Barua, op.cit., pp. 42-46.
- 6 While writing on Indranārāyana, son and successor of Durlabhanārāyana, N.N. Acharyya has referred to the work entitled Jayadratha Vada where it is mentioned that Indranarayana would be the Pancha Gauḍa through the blessings of Śiva, See op.cit., p. 162.
- 7 Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum, Vol. II
Coin No. 38, p. 152.
S.N. Bhattacharyya also suggests that Sikandar Shāh attacked Kāmarūpa in 1357 and advanced as far east as the region between the Manās and Badnadi (i.e. Kāmarūpa proper), refuting the contention of Stapleton (J.A.S.B. 1910, p. 622) that Sikandar Shāh's exploits were confined only to Mymensing

District. Bhattacharyya further states that Sikandar Shāh also issued coins which were minted at Kāmarūpa.

See A History of Muchal North East Frontier Policy, Calcutta, 1929, p. 63.

J. N. Sarkar (History of Bengal (Muslim period) Patna, 1973, p. 110), however placed the date of Sikandar Shāh's invasion in 1356 A.D. instead of 1357 A.D. on the ground that the Bengal Sultan had to fight against the Delhi Sultan in 1357 A.D. on his (Sikandar's) accession to the throne of Bengal.

N. N. Acharyya has rejected the views of both the earlier Scholars. He agreed to K. L. Barua's statement that 'the conquest of Kāmarūpa by Sikandar as recorded in the coin of 759 A.H. is an empty boast' (Early History of Kamarupa, Shillong, 1933, pp. 233-35) and stated that Sikandar Shāh ascended the throne in 1357 A.D. and not in 1356 as suggested by Sarkar. Acharyya^{has} remarked that in 1357 A.D. on his accession Sikandar had to fight with the Sultan of Delhi. Hence, in the same year as noted by Acharyya 'it was impossible for the Bengal Sultan even to think of the invasion of such a distant country, not to speak of its actual undertaking'.

See op. cit., pp. 162-164.

- 8 Gunabhiram Barua, op. cit., p. 28; Haliram Dhakial Phukan, (Assam Burañii, (Bengali) Gauhati, 1369 B.S.), pp. 9-10 and Jenkins (J. A. S. B., 1940, pp. 766-67) supply us with the names of a few rulers such as Arimatta, Fengua, Gajanka, Suranka,

Mrgānka etc., who continued their reign upto the emergence of the Khen dynasty in the Kāmatā kingdom.

Also see N.N. Acharyya, Op.Cit., pp. 164-71.

9 Gait, op.cit., p. 44.

N.N. Vasu draws out attention to the fact that Gait has relied on Gunabhiram Barua's rendering based on a legend (Assam Burāñji, pp. 33-35) which lacks support of contemporary history. Vasu referred to the Riyās-us Salātin (tr. by Maulavi Abdus Salām) pp. 132-33, which described Husain Shāh's invasion of Kāmarūpa without mentioning anything about the Khen dynasty and of its rulers.

He further suggested that all the Bhuyāns asserted their independence (the Bhuyāns had since long been in Kāmarūpa) only after the death of Durlabhanārāyana and ruled in Kāmatā until they were subdued by the rising power of Visvasimha, the founder of the Koch dynasty.

See Social History of Kamarupa, Vol. I, New Delhi, First Reprint 1983, pp. 23-33.

It may be noted in this connection that it has been clearly mentioned in the Kāmarūpa Burāñji of the three rulers viz. Nīladhvaja, Cakradhvaja and Nīlādhara. They ruled over the tract stretching from Singimari ^{in the} (present district of Rangpur) upto the bank of the Brahmaputra opposite Hājo, with their capital at Kāmarūpa. However, the following text does not refer to any legend.

S.K.Bhuyan (ed), Kamarūpa Burañi, Gauhati, 1930, p. 99.

10 S.K.Chatterjee, Kirāta-Jana-Kṛti, Calcutta, 1974, p. 115.

11 W.W.Hunter, Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol.X,
1876, pp. 368-69.

S.K.Chatterjee, however, says that Nīladvaja, the founder of the Khen dynasty, fought and overthrew the last scion of the Pāla family of Bengal, See op.cit., p. 115.

Cf. Bardhanakota of Rangpur.

Maheśwar Neeg also suggests that Nīladvaja defeated the last degenerate descendant of the Pāla family and became the king of Kamarūpa with his capital at Kāmāpura. See Sankaradeva and his Times, Gauhati, 1965, p. 45.

Gunabhiram also supports that the Pāla dynasty of either Kamarūpa or Bengal was supplanted by the Khen dynasty. See op.cit., p. 33.

From B.Chakraverty (A Cultural History of Bhutan, Vol.2, Chittaranjan, 1979, p.25). We learn that the Khens lived in Central Bhutan. 'A Khen Chief overthrew the degenerate descendant of the pala dynasty of Bengal with the help of an influential Brahmana and established a Khen dynasty which rules for ^{three} their generations'. On the other hand, it is learnt from Asm Burañi that there prevailed a chaotic condition after the death of Mṛgāṅka, the last ruler of the line of Arimatta. See Haliram Dhakianol Phuken, op.cit., p. 10.

Kamarūpa Burañi states that after the line of

Arimatta, there emerged a new dynasty consisting of three kings, Nilādhvaja, Cakradhvaja and Nilānvāra who ruled over the kingdom of Kānatā.

S.K.Bhuyan (ed.), op.cit., p.99.

12 The work is said to have been composed in the 16th century A.D.

A. Khan Chowdhury, Koch Biharor Itihasa (Sengali)

Cooch Behar, 1936, p.39.

13 D.C.Sircar, Studies in the Geography of Ancient and

Medieval India, 2nd ed., pp.100-101.

14 Hamilton described Niladhvaja as belonging to the Khyen (Khen) dynasty : Martin, The Eastern India, Vol.III, London, 1838, pp.408-9. The Kamarūpar Burāñi (p.99) mentions that king Niladhvaja was of Koch Origin. The Gosānīmāngala composed in 1828 A.D. refers to a legend according to which Kāntesvara (the lord of Kāntā, Kānatā or Kānākhyā) after becoming king from a humble position (i. e. Shepherd boy) bounded the city of Kānatāpura after the Goddess Kāntesvari or Kānatesvari, also known as Candī, Bhavānī or Gosānī. Niladhvaja may be identified with the Kāntesvara of the Gosānīmāngala. It mentions the rule of one ruler which came to an end owing to the Muslim invasion. But it is given above that there were three rulers of which Nilānvāra, the last ruler was defeated by the Muslims.

Gunabhiram Barua gives us the legend which resembles mostly with the above account, See op.cit., pp.33-35.

- 15 Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol.XV, p.32.

'Buchanan estimated the circumference of Kamatapura at 19 miles; the palace as in the case of Burmese and Chinese towns, stands in the Centre. See H.Blochmann, Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal, Calcutta, 1968, p.33. A.Khan Chowdhury (op.cit., p.40) mentions that as a result of huge number of Brāhmanas the kingdom of Niladhvaja was known as 'Brāhmaṇa rājya'.

- 16 Cf. 'Gosaimari' by R.D.Banerjee in J.A.S.B., Vol.XIX, 1977, p.20.

Gunabhiram Barua also informs us that Niladhvaja repaired the old city and made Kāmatāpura as his capital and assumed the title Kāmatasvara. See op.cit., p.34.

N.N.Acharyya, again observes that Niladhvaja rebuilt and extended the city of Kāmatāpura by repairs and new constructions. ^{See op.cit., p.172} Also see N.N.Vasu (op.cit., Vol.I, p.31) see op.cit., p.172. He suggests that Kāmatāpura was built long before Nilāvara, if, however, he at all existed. The city was built at about 10th century A.D.

- 16a N.N.Paul(ed.) Gosaimangala, pp.19-25 (text).

- 17 S.N.Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p.65.

He ascribes this warfare between Barbak Shāh, the Bengal Sultan and Nilāvara, the third Kāmatā King. K.L. Barua (op.cit., p.263), however, informs us that the invasion took place in the reign of Cakradhvaja.

N.N.Acharyya (op.cit., p.175) also disagrees with Bhattacharyya.

- 18 The expedition was probably sent in order to take back the territory to the west of the Karatoyā which was overrun by the Kāmarūpa forces (J.N.Sarkar, op.cit., p.134, N.N.Acharyya (op.cit., p.173) also supports this view). Initially the Kāmata king took lead of the war and defeated and destroyed the Bengal army. Later on, Ismāil Ghāzi, a general of Barbak Shāh is said to have changed the course of the war by his magical powers and the Kāmata king surrendered to Ismāil and embraced Islam.

S.N.Bhattacharyya, op.cit. p.66; Gait does not, however, tend to believe the tradition of Ismāil's alleged victory over the king of Kāmata-pura for absence of any corroborating evidence. See ^{Martin,} op.cit., p.410.

- 19 Martin, loc.cit.
 20 Gait, op.cit., p.45.
 21 Khan Chowdhury, op.cit., p.43.
 22 Gait, op.cit., p.45.

From Riyāz-us-Salātin (pp.132-133) we come to know that Hussain Shāh laid seize to Kāmata or Kāmarūpa after his conquest of Orissa.

Gosānīmangala refers to a legend that the downfall of Nīlāmvara was accomplished for the treachery of his Brāhmana minister.

See N.N.Paul (ed.) op.cit., pp.53ff.

- 23 P.N.Bhattacharyya, Kāmarūpa Śāsanāvalī, p.31 fn.
- 24 The Bhuyāns subdued by Hussain Shāh were Mal Kunwar, Rūpnārāyana, Gasa Rakhan and Lakamīnārāyana, Abdus Salam, op.cit., p.132.
- 25 Mīrzā Muhammad Kāsim, Alamgirnāmah, Eng.tr. by H. Vansittart, Calcutta, 1838, p.72.
- 26 Haliram Dhekial Phukan, op.cit., p.11; H.Blochmann, op.cit., pp.108-09.
- 27 Haliram Dhekial Phukan, op.cit., p.11.

Gait also says that after departure of the Muhammadans, there were no king of the whole of the Kāmata Country which was ruled by a number of petty chiefs. See A History of Assam, p.46.

Again, M.Neog suggests the rule of the Bāro Bhuyāns immediately after the fall of the Khen dynasty of Kāmata Kingdom.

See op.cit., p.46.

We, however, get from N.N.Acharyya (op.cit., pp.178-79), Mohini Saikia (Assam-Muslim relation and its cultural significance, Golaghat (Assam), 1978, pp.90-94), the names of a few rulers viz., Durlabha or Durlabhendra, Sucharuchand etc. The rulers were said to have subdued by Viśvasiṅha, the founder of the Koch dynasty and his son Naranārāyana respectively.

- 28 Abul-Fasl, Alamgirnāmah, Eng.Tr.by H.Beveridge Vol.III, First Indian Reprint, New Delhi, 1973, p.1067.

It is mentioned in the original manuscript of the Rājopākhyāna. (about 1823 A.D.) that Hīrā and Jīrā were the wives of Haridāsa (Hariyā mandala). Hīrā was the mother of Śisū and Viśū by Mahādeva (Śiva), and Jīrā of Candana and Madana by Haridāsa. Candana became the king in 1510 when the Rāja Śaka was introduced. (See B. Das (ed.), Rājopākhyāna (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1935, p. 15).

W. W. Hunter (Statistical Account of Bengal, 1876 Vol. X, pp. 406-07) says that Candana and Madana were the two sons of Jīrā, the wife of Hariyā Mandala. Candana became the king in 1511 A.D. and reigned for thirteen years and he was regarded as the first king of the Koch dynasty.

But the names of Candana and Madana do not occur in the three genealogical table of the Royal family (written in 1839 A.D.) which was preserved in the State Council, Cooch Behar.

See Ghosal, op. cit., pp. 107-08.

Scholars like Robinson (A Descriptive Account of Assam, p. 152), Gait (A History of Assam, p. 46) and F. Buchanan (J. A. S. E., p. 1838, No. 73)^{p10} state that two brothers Candana and Madana ruled for eight years at a place Maralavās, about thirty miles north from Kāmatāpura.

Scholars like Gait and others have also suggested

that there was no sufficient evidence for assuming that Candana and Madana belonged to the family to which Visvasinha belonged.

29 N.C. Sharma (ed.), op.cit., pp. 11-12.

30 The Origin of the Koch tribe has been discussed in Chapter I on People.

31 From the Darrang Rājya Vaisāvalī, we get the names of following Bhuyāns who were brought by Visvasinha under subjugation : Bāra Bhuyān, Saru Bhuyān, Auguriyā Bhuyān, Chuti Bhuyān, Kusuma Bhuyān, Dighala Bhuyān, Kaliyā Bhuyān, The Bhuyān of Jhārgayā, Kailāsa Bhuyān and Karnapura Bhuyān.
N.C. Sharma (Ed.) op.cit., p. 16, VV. 89-122.

32 Gait, op.cit., p. 49.

33 The following verses from the writings of Pītāmbara, a contemporary of Mahārājā Visvasinha are worthy of notice in this connection :

.... mahārājā Visvasinha Kāmatānagare |
tār putra bhoge tulya nahe purandare ||
Mārkendeya purāna, Patra 1
Kāmatānagare Visvasinha naresvara |
Pracanda Pratāpa rājā bhoge Purandara ||
Ibid., Patra 35.

Again, the Darrang Rājyavāśavali (N.C. Sharma ed. p. 22) refers to Behar as the capital of Visvasinha. Here, the term Behar possibly indicates the whole of the territory in which

the capital Kāmatānagara was built by Visvasimha.

34 Cf. Kāmatā Īśvara Vando Visvasimha Nṛpaṅgava

Durgādāsa, Bhulā nākhyaṇa (in Bengali)

quoted by N.N.Vasu, op. cit., Vol.II, p.46.

Also see J.N.Sarkar, The History of Bengal, Muslim period, Patna, 1973, p.184.

- 35 A good deal of confusion arises regarding the date of birth of two Koch Kings, Visvasimha and Naranārāyaṇa. Scholars like S.K.Bhuyan (Anglo-Assamese Relations, Gauhati, 1949, p.260), J.N.Sarkar (A Short History of Aurangzeb, Chap.VII, 3rd ed. Calcutta, 1962, p.115), H.C.Ray (Dynastic History of Northern India, Vol.II, Calcutta, 1936, p.265) and N.N. Acharyya (The History of Medieval Assam, Delhi 1966, Reprinted 1984, p.193), together consider 1515-1540 A.D. as the reign period of Visvasimha.

Again, S.K.Chatterjee (Kirāta-Jana-Kṛti, Calcutta, 1974, p.118) suggests that Visvasimha ruled from 1496 to 1533 (or 1540 A.D.) M.Neog also assigned Visvasimha's reign from C 1496- C 1533 (or 1540) See Sankaradeva and His Times, Gauhati, 1965, p.61.

But the works like Biswanath^{Das} (ed.), (Rājōnākhyaṇa (in Bengali), Calcutta, 1985, p.22) Hunter, (Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol.X, 1876, p.407) and H.N.Chowdhury, (The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement, 1903 p.230) inform us that Naranārāyaṇa, son and successor of

Viśvasiṃha, ascended the throne in 1556 A.D. This date of accession has further been strengthened by some of the coins issued by Harenārāyaṇa bearing the date Śaka 1477 or 1555 A.D.

The Darrang Rāja Vasāyali, as already observed, states that Viśvasiṃha ruled for a period of 25 years. On the basis of this evidence, S.N. Bhattacharyya, (op.cit., pp.76-77) perhaps rightly been suggested that Viśvasiṃha started his rule from 1529-30 A.D. This may be a more plausible explanation from the point of Candana's reign ending 1524 A.D. as postulated by Hunter (op.cit., p.407). Hunter, as noticed above, mentioned that Candana became the king in 1511 A.D. That Candana started his rule from this period may well fit in with the fact that Hussain Shāh's hold^{over} the Kāmātā Koch region till that period, as evident from his coins bearing date 1513 A.D., might have stood on a dwindling position. From this period till the rise of Viśvasiṃha, there was possibly an interregnum of 5 or 6 years which witnessed the consolidation of power by one Koch chief Hājo and his son-in-law Hariyā Mondala at the cost of the Bhuyāns who were, however, finally subdued by Viśvasiṃha.

36 Biswanath Das (ed.), op.cit., p.16.

Śiśyasīṃha was the stepbrother of Viśvasiṃha who gave the title of 'Rai-kot' (Chief of the fort or

the Commander-in-Chief) to the former. Sīsyasiṃha then founded his dynasty in the Parganāh of Baikānthapura near Jalpaiguri.

See Ghosal, pp. 284-90.

The Rājās of Baikānthapura were said to have paid tributes to the Mahārājā of Koch Bihar and held the Royal Umbrella at the coronation upto the reign of Lakṣmīnārāyana of Koch Bihar. C. Sanyal, The Rajbansis of North Bengal, Calcutta, 1965, p. 7.

But we learn from the report of Mercier and Chauvet (The Cooh Behar Select Records, Vol. II, 1788, pp. 19, 20, 169) that the Rāikats performed the Umbrella ceremony during the installation of five kings from Viśvasiṃha and that Mahārājā Modasanārāyana appointed Mahīnārāyana and his son Yajñanārāyana successively as Nāzirs.

37 N. C. Sharma, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

38 Biswanath Das, op. cit., p. 16; Yoginī Tantra (First part of Trayodasa Patala).

39 N. C. Sharma (ed.), op. cit., pp. 52-53.

40 Ibid., p. 59.

41 Ibid., pp. 60-61.

42 N. N. Acharyya, op. cit., p. 194.

43 Cf. Āpun bhrātṛk yuva Nṛpati pātīlā |

Ānandate Saigrāma siṃha je nām dilā ||

N. C. Sharma, op. cit., p. 64.

- 44 Ibid., pp. 72-97.
 45 Ibid., p. 69.
 46 Akbarnāmah, Vol. III, p. 1067.
 47 S. Ghosal, op. cit., p. 152.
 48 Loc. cit.
 49 Gait, 57.

But this theory has not been accepted by S.N. Bhattacharyya, op. cit., p. 105. He says that Raghudeva did not assume sovereign power till the death of Naranārāyaṇa, and nowhere either in Vaiśāvalīs or in the Burañjīs it was mentioned that Raghudeva was obliged to pay tribute and acknowledge vassalage. Further, it is proved from the inscription engraved on the temple of Hayagrīva Mādhava (1505 Saka, 1583 A.D.) that he became already the 'Lord of Kāmarūpa'.

- 50 S.N. Sen, Prācīn Bānglā Patra Saikhalana (a collection of old Bengali letters), Calcutta University, 1942, p. 3.
 51 Abul-Fazl, Akbarnāmah, Vol. III, Eng. tr. by H. Beveridge, First Indian Reprint, New Delhi, 1973, p. 1068.
 52 S.N. Bhattacharyya, op. cit., p. 118.
 53 S.K. Bhuyan (ed.), Bahārīstān-i-Ghaybī, Vol. I, p. 40.

Before conquest of the Mughals, Ghoraghāt was included in Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa's kingdom. Later on, the Mughals, as we have already discussed in the introduction, seized Bhitārband and Bahīrband from Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa's territory. And Ghoraghāt was also captured during the course of their

conquest. It formed an Imperial outpost.

- 54 Alamgir Nāmah quoted by Blochmann in J.A.S.B., 1872, pp. 65-66;
Ghosal, op.cit., p. 208.
- 55 Dinesh sen, Vṛhat Vāṅga, Vol. II, 1341-42 Bengali San, p. 1075.
- 56 Mr. Gladwin, A Narrative of Bengal, (Eng. tr. from original
persian), 1788. Gladwin says, "Before the time of Moorshed
Kuley Khan, the Rajas of Tipperah, Coatch Bahar, and Assam
preserved an entire independence. They refused all obedience
to the Court of Delhy, used the imperial Chetr, and coined
money in their own names".
- 57 The Cooch Behar Select Records, Vol. II, p. 130.
- 58 Biswanath Das (ed.), Rājopākhyāna, p. 40
- 59 Loc. cit.
- 60 Mercer and Chauvet, op. cit., p. 169.
- 61 Ibid., p. 243. The relation between Dhairyendranārāyana
and the Bhutiyās will be discussed at length in
the following pages.
- 62 R.B. Pemberton, Report on Bookee, 1898, Reprinted,
Calcutta, 1961, p. 29. He says that there were eleven
Duars(gates) on the Bengal Frontier.
- 63 B.C. Chowdhury, Sambhu Vaśīṣa Garita, Kalkina, p. 12.
- 64 E.T. Dalton, Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, 1872, p. 96.
- 65 E. Gait, A History of Assam, pp. 11, 51.

- 66 S.N.Bhattacharyya, A History of Mughal North East Frontier Policy, p.48.
- 67 Eden's Report on the State of Bhutan, Part III, Bengal Secretariat, p.108.
- 68 Gait, op.cit., p.51.
- 69 N.C.Sharma (ed), op.cit., pp.61-63.

Gait also holds that 'although there is no confirmation of this statement, the occurrence is not altogether impossible'. See op.cit., p.51.

A.C.Banerjee, (The Eastern Frontier of British India, 1964, p.2) however, says that 'no definite evidence is available in support of this tradition'.

- 70 J Horton Ryley, Ralph Fitch, England's Pioneer to India and Burma, London, 1899, p.133.
- C. Wessels, Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia,
71 The Hague, 1924, p.140.
- 72 D.F.Rennie (Surgeon), Bhutan and the Story of Door War (1866), p.42.
- 73 Charles Bell, People of Tibet (1908), p.145

Quoting from Bhutanese history lho-hi-ehhojung.

74 Ibid. Loc.cit.

75 Krishna Kanta Bose, Some Account of the Country of Bhutan, Asiatic Researches, Vol.XV, p.129.

76 Biswanath Das (ed.), Rājanskhya, p.16.

Also see A.C.Campbell, A Comprehensive Archaeological, Biographical and Pictorial History of Bengal, Behar and Orissa, Vol.I - Chapter on 'Glimpses of Bengal', tr. of the portion on Cooch Behar in Bengali by N.N.Paul, Calcutta, 1336 Bengal San, p.10.

- 77 S.C.Ghosal, History of Gooch Behar, p. 126.
- 78 Dinesh Sen, Vrhat Vanga, Vol.II, p. 1072.
- 79 A.C.Campbell, op.cit., p. 12.
- 80 Ibid., p. 13.
- 81 Mercer & Chauvet's Report, Vol.II, Calcutta, 1787,
Vol.II, pp. 19, 20, 169.
- 82 Ibid., p. 19.
- 83 Ghosal, op.cit., pp. 215-16.
- 84 Mercer and Chauvet, op.cit., p. 169
- 85 Campbell, op.cit., p. 15.

The name of the Rāikats have been mentioned here as
Bhujadhara and Jagadhara.

- 86 Ghosal, op.cit., p. 216.

Mercer and Chauvet, on the other hand, record that
Yajñanārāyana fled from the capital after receiving the news
of advent of the Rāikats with a vast army. See op.cit., p. 169.

- 87 B.Das (ed.), Rājōnśkhyāna, p. 38.
- 88 Ghosal, op.cit., p. 219;

The Rājōnśkhyāna, however, does not refer to such
a battle fought between Yajñanārāyana and the Rāikats.
Moreover, it says that at the beginning of Mahārāja
Mahēndranārāyana's reign, Rāikat Jagadeva was dead and
Bhujadeva was seriously ill.

See op.cit., pp. 38-39.

- 89 Campbell, op.cit., p. 16; S.N.Sen, op.cit., p. 5.
- 90 Mercer and Chauvet, op.cit., p. 233; Also see S.N.Sen, op.cit.,
p. 5.

91 It may be mentioned in this connection that in the first half of the 16th century the Devarāja of Bhutan acknowledged the supremacy of Visvasimha. But afterwards during the period of Vasudevanārāyana the Bhutiyās took away with them the Royal Umbrella, the Elephant Tusk, Throne and Tarabari (sword). S.N.Sen, op.cit., p.5.

92 S.C.Ghosal, op.cit., p.234; S.N.Sen, op.cit., p.6.

93 S.N.Sen, op.cit., p.6.

94 A detailed discussion regarding the family feud followed followed after the death of king Devendranārāyana has been dealt with in S.C.Ghosal's, op.cit., pp.235-37.

95 Campbell, op.cit., p.17.

It is said that Dhairyendranārāyana had a dispute regarding succession with his brother Rāmanārāyana who had an ambition for the throne. Rāmanārāyana appealed to the Bhutiyās and was re-instated by them. Rāmanārāyana was, however, subsequently put to death by Dhairyendranārāyana who was very much sceptic about the motives of his brother.

96 Ghosal, op.cit., p.246.

97 Mercer and Chauvet, op.cit., p.171; S.N.Sen, op.cit., p.6.

98 Ghosal, op.cit., pp.409-11.

99 See for details of the Treaty between East India Company and the Māhārāja of Koch Bihar. C.U.Aitchinson, A Collection of Treaties, engagements and Sanads, Bengal and Cooch Behar, Calcutta, 1930, Kravis Reprint, II Cooch Behar, 1973, p.189.

- 100 A.N.Chandra, The Sannyasi Rebellion, Calcutta, 1977, pp.71-74.
Also in Journal of the American Oriental Society, 98,
(1978).

Warrior ascetics in Indian History

D.N.Lorensen, p.73.

In the early 1770s some Sannyasis who worked as mercenaries engaged them in free lands in plundering in Bengal. Their most important involvement, however, was in the struggle for succession to the Throne of Koch Bihar in extreme north eastern Bengal. In the complex dispute which flared up periodically between about 1765 and 1790 the Sannyasis usually were on one side and the English on the other.

- 101 C.Sanyal, The Rajpranis of North Bengal, p.8.
102 A.Deb, India and Bhutan
Bhutan and India, p.74.
103 S.C.Ghosal, op.cit., pp.259-60;

"The fertile tracts of Maraghat and Chamurchi became a bone for contention between Cooch Behar and Bhutan and alienated these neighbouring states. The most peculiar transaction which sheds light on the character of the Commercial diplomacy of the time was the cession to Bhutan of the territory known as Ambari Falakata and Jalpesh. Alexander Hamilton, who led two mission to Bhutan in 1776 and 1777, recommended the cession of these ^{tracts} treaty so that he could "induce the Deb Raja to fulfil his agreement with Mr. Bogle and only to buy moderate transit duties on merchandise". The Renunciation of Jalpesh and

Ambari-Falakata were territorial concessions to Bhutan made in the interest of the Tibetan trade". A. Deb, Kailash, on the Himalayan Journal, Vol. I, 1973, pp. 83-84. C. U. Aitchinson, A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads, Calcutta, 1930, Reprint, 1973, pp. 189-90.

104 N.C. Sharma (ed.), *op.cit.*, pp. 41-42.

105 It may be mentioned here that Visvasinha already extended his kingdom upto Gauhati on the east and the Karatoya on the west.

See Gait, *op.cit.*, p. 49; R.C. Majumdar, The History of Bengal, (Medieval period), p. 156 and S.N. Bhattacharyya, *op.cit.*, p. 75.

106 Khan Choudhury Amanatulla Ahmed, Kuch Biharar Itihās, p. 89.

107 H.C. Goswami (ed.), Purāni Assm Burañi, Gauhati, 1922, pp. 61-63;

S.K. Bhuyan (ed.) Deodhāl Assm Burañi, Gauhati, 2nd ed. 1962, p. 107.

However, the date 1533 A.D. given in the Purāni Assm Burañi has been accepted by Lakami Devi in her book 'Abom Tribal Relations, Gauhati, 1968, p. 211. She has mentioned that the expedition which was sent under the Commander-in-Chief Chankham or Tankham became Bargohāin in 1532 A.D. (Harkanta Barua, Assm Burañi, S.K. Bhuyan (ed.), Gauhati, 2nd ed. 1962, p. 25).

108 Laksmi Devi, however, remarked that the compilers of Burāñjis have confused the incident with the second expedition sent against Turbak which took place in 1532-33 A.D. See op.cit., p. 212.

109 Ghosal refers to such an expedition of the Ahom General Chankhem against Visvasimha. But he mentions the date of 1483 A.D. which, however, seems to be untenable.

See op.cit., p. 110.

Laksmi Devi contends that Visvasimha was made a tributary Rājā of the Ahom king.

110 See N.C. Sharma (ed), op.cit., pp. 41-42. As regards the cause of the war it is learnt from G.C. Barua's Ahom Burāñji, Shillong, 1930, p. 77 that Visvasimha accompanied by his brother Sisyasimha came to the Ahom Court to offer their annual tribute consisting of horses and many other valuable things to King Suhungmung. They declared them as slaves to the Ahom king and requested him to render help when necessary. The Ahom King in return gave them some cows and buffaloes.

Harkanta Barua

From another Burāñji (Assam Burāñji, S.K. Bhuyan (ed.), 2nd ed. Gauhati, 1962, pp. 30-31) we learn that Visvasimha did not pay the stipulated amount of tribute as settled earlier and as a result, the Ahom King sent an envoy to enquire about the matter which irked Visvasimha. For this reason Visvasimha possibly resolved on the aforesaid invasion.

- 111 E.Gait, op.cit., p.50.
- 112 S.N.Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p.74.
- 113 N.C.Sharma (ed.), op.cit., p.65; Gait, op.cit., pp.52-53.
R.C.Majumdar (ed.), op.cit. pp.156-57 and P.G.Barua,
op.cit., p.126.
- 114 R.C.Majumdar (ed.), op.cit., p.157.
- 115 Gait, op.cit., p.53.
- 116 Ghosal, op.cit., pp.130-33; L.Devi, op.cit., p.215.

Ghosal mentions of the gifts presented to the Ahom king along with the letter. The things were : two ghuris (a kind of cloth or petti coat), one bow, a pair of ceng fish, one pillow, one jakoi (a fishing implement made of bamboos), five saris (cloths worn by females), gom cheng (china silk), five chitts (a kind of cloth), ten ghāgris (wearing apparel), 20 black cowries and 10 white cowries.

- 117 L.Devi, op.cit., p.215.
- 118 Ghosal, op.cit., p.133.
- 119 S.K.Bhuyan (ed.), Assam Bursāni (SM), Gauhati, 1945, pp.38-39.
- 120 Gait, op.cit., 53; M.Neog, Sankaradeva and His times, Gauhati, 1965, p.61.
- 121 S.K.Bhuyan (ed.), Assam Bursāni, H.K.Barua, p.32; Gunabhiram Barua, op.cit., Reprint, p.44.
- 122 N.C.Sharma, op.cit., pp.73-76.
- 123 M.Neog, op.cit., pp.62-62.
- 124 G.C.Barua, op.cit., p.38.

- 125 There is a good deal of controversy as regards the destruction of the Kāmākhyā temple by Kālāpāhāra, the General of Sulaimān Karrāni (1565-72 A.D.), the Bengal Sultan. No specific information has yet been received to form an idea that the aforesaid temple was destroyed by Kālāpāhāra. Here, it seems needless to go into details. The issue has been discussed elaborately in the following works : S.N. Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p.79; J.A.R.S. Vol.XXV, Gauhati, 1979-80, pp.1-8.
- 126 M. Neog, Prācya Śāsanāvalī, p.2
- 127 According to Akbarnāmah Vol.III, tr. by Beveridge, p.1068), 'the ruler of Kuc did not pay his respects to the Hakim (Governor) of Bengal, and Sulaimān Karrāni proceeded to make war upon him, and returned after failure'.
- 128 S.K. Bhuyan (ed.), Assam Burañi (SM), p.45.
Gunabhiram Barua, op.cit., p.45.
- 129 J.N. Sarkar (ed) The History of Bengal (Muslim period), Patna, 1973, p.185.
- 130 G.C. Barua, op.cit., p.90.
- 131 L. Devi, op.cit., p.220.
- 132 Ibid., p.221.
- 133 Akbarnāmah, Vol.III, pp.349, 1067, 170.

The Akbarnāmah (Vol.III, p.1067) states that Naranārāyaṇa, Grandson of Bīsa or Viśvasimha (obviously a mistake for son) made various presents and offered his submission to the Mughal Emperor (Akbarnāmah, Vol.III, p.349).

In this context, S.N.Bhattacharyya's observation is worth mentioning.

He has remarked that both Gait and Stewart were mistaken by relying on the wrong translation of the Akbarnāmah (J.A.S.B., 1972, p.52) and its ^{repetition} ~~repetition~~ is annotations to the Ain-i-Akbari (Vol.I, p.331) by Blochmann in the event of Naranārāyaṇa's submission to the Imperial Court.

He has criticised Gait for his comment which was based on wrong translation of the Ain-i-Akbari mentioned above (See A History of Assam, p.56)

Again, Bhattacharyya, (A History of Mughal North East Frontier Policy, p.98 fn) said that 'Stewart has misconstrued the import of both the statements and has been bold enough to assert that "Khan Jahan compelled the Raja of Cooch Behar to pay a tribute and to acknowledge himself a vassal of the empire" (History of Bengal, p.106).

Bhattacharyya suggests that 'there was no acceptance of formal supremacy of the Mughal Emperor on the part of the Koch king. The latter did not personally wait upon Akbar, but simply sent an envoy, with an adulatory letter containing professions of friendship and goodwill, besides some presents, probably silk and musk with which his domain abounded. There is no mention of tribute, territorial concession or any other symbol of political tutelage anywhere'.

134 Ibid., pp. 349, 1067.

Here again, Bhattacharyya contends that "in view of the troublous political situation in Mughal Bengal and the relatively advantageous position of the Koch Bihar State of this period, it seems improbable that there was a formal acknowledgement of political supremacy by the Koch king. A friendly alliance, as is natural between two independent neighbouring states, was now established. This simple event, dressed up in Abul Fasl's florid style, misled Stewart and he read it an act of definite political submission". See op.cit., p. 99.

135 S.N. Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p. 101.

136 S.N. Bhattacharyya, Akbar-nāmah, Vol. III, tr. by Beveridge, p. 621.

S.N. Bhattacharyya states that the 'Narsin', the Land holder (buni) as shown in the Akbar-nāmah Vol. III, p. 621, is the same as Naranārāyana or 'Mālgosain' as is called by Abul Fasl. He further says that the prefix 'Nara' might have omitted owing to inadvertence or ignorance or with a view to brevity.

137 Supra, ref. no. 43(a)

As regards the date of the event, the Vaisāvalīs are silent. However, we get from Gunabhiram Barua (Āṣā Barua, p. 47) that the incident took place in 1503 Śaka (1581 A.D.). This date has also been supported by Gait, op.cit., p. 57. He says, 'This was in A.D. 1581. Muhamadan writers refer

to the two kingdoms as Koch Bihar and Koch Hajo respectively, the former name of course still survives, but the only trace of the latter is in the town called Hajo, a few miles north of Gauhati'.

138 H.C.Goswami (ed.), Purāni Assam Burañji, Gauhati, 1922, pp. 125-26.

139 S.N.Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p. 110.

140 Cf. Akbarnāmah, tr. by Beveridge, Vol. III, p. 1067.

Stewart (History of Bengal, 1813, p. 119) and Gait (op.cit., p. 66) also observed on the authority of the above source that Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa offered his submission declaring himself as a Vassal of the Mughal Empire in 1596 A.D.

141 Akbarnāmah, Vol. III, 1081.

142 Ibid., p. 1082. Also see The Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. I, Abu'l Fazl-Allami, tr. by H. Blochmann, Calcutta (Reprinted from 2nd ed. 1927), Delhi, 1977, pp. 362-363.

143 Akbarnāmah, Vol. III, pp. 1093-94.

Katrābhū is said to have been situated on the bank of the Lākṣya (Sitalākṣya) river near Khejarpur to the south-east of Daoca. (Dhakar Itihāsa, Vol. I, p. 448). In the Map of Van Broucke (1600 A.D.) Katrābhū has been shown in the same locality. Akbarnāmah locates Katrābhū Six Kos (12 miles) from Bikrampur. The Koch Chronicles and, however, the Burañjis, however, do not mention about this incident.

- 144 S.N.Bhattacharyya, op.cit., pp. 125-26.
- 145 S.K.Bhuyan, Annals of the Delhi Badshahate (tr. from Pādshāh Burāñjī), p. 137.
- 146 S.K.Bhuyan (ed.), Bahārīstān-i-Ghāybi, Vol.I, p.40;
The Ain-i-Akbari, Vol.I, tr. by Blochmann, p.362;
The Tuzk-i-Ishāngiri, tr. A.Rogers ed. by H.Beveridge,
Vol.I, 2nd ed., New Delhi, 1968, p.443.
- This event as suggested by S.^N.Bhattacharyya (op.cit., pp.126-27), is of immense significance in the annals of Mughal north-east frontier policy. It "symbolised the completion of the process which had begun with the political subjection of Koch Bihar in the winter of 1596 A.D. and which was soon to affect the states of Kamarupa and Assam as well".
- 147 Abdul Hamid Lahori, Pādshāhnāmāh in The History of India Vol.VII tr. by Elliot and Dowson ed., First Indian Edition, Allahabad, 1964, p.65.
- 148 S.K.Bhuyan (ed.), Bahārīstān-i-Ghāybi, Vol.I, p.40.
- 149 N.C.Sharma, (ed.), op.cit., p.149.
- 150 R.C.Majumder (ed.), The History of Bengal (Mediaeval period), p.159.
- 151 S.K.Bhuyan (ed.), op.cit., p.222.
- 152 Ibid., p.242.
- 153 Ibid., pp.237-38.
- 154 Ibid., pp.230,31.
- 155 Ibid., pp.240-41.

- 156 Ibid., 241; S.K.Bhuyan, Anglo-Assamese Relations, Gauhati 1949, p.260.
- 157 Loc.cit.
- 158 S.K.Bhuyan (ed.), Kāmarūpar Burañi, pp.13-14.
- 159 N.C.Sharma (ed.), op.cit., pp.147-48.
- 160 S.N.Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p.147.
- 161 S.K.Bhuyan (ed.), Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, Vol.I, pp.287-88.
- 162 Ibid., p.288.
- 163 Ibid., p.290.
- 164 K.L.Barua (Studies in the Early History of Assam, M.Neog(ed.), Gauhati University, 1973, pp.9-10) describes this rebellion although in a very limited scope, yet he stressed particularly on the idealism of this insurrection. He referred to Koch hero Sanātan who gave a strong fighting against the Imperial power. He also gave the names of a few other rebels such as Sumarood (Samudra Kāyeth of Rangjuli, Parsurāma of Solmāri and Mānu Govinda of Beltola etc. Barua has mentioned that the rebels were influenced by the lofty ideals of Patriotism which provided them with an immense impetus to fight against the mighty Mughals.

Also see S.N.Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p.178; But the real cause of this uprising as assigned to the treacherous confinement of the Koch and Kāmrūpa rulers-Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa and Parikṣitnārāyaṇa respectively was not, perhaps, limited

only to that extent. It had far deeper root. The oppression meted out to the inhabitants of this region by the Mughal Faujdars or the Karoriā (Revenue collector) probably provided the cogent reason for this. Thus the Koch Chief Sanātan organised a strong force of rebels to fight against the Mughals. A revolt was broke out under his leadership. Sanātan put the Faujdar Ibrāhīm Karorī to great strait. He also foiled the joint attack of Abdul Bāqī and Bābā Aba Bakr under the leadership of Mīrṣā Nathan (See S.K.Bhuyan (ed.), Daharistān-i-Ghaybī, Vol.I, pp.353-54). Subsequently, Mīrṣā Nathan sued for peace. Accordingly, Sanātan was informed of the proposal. He (Mīrṣā Nathan) assured him that the Ibrāhīm Karorī would be punished. But Sanātan rejected it. Then, war was renewed in which Sanātan though initially fought relentlessly, however, could not come out successful later on and finding no other alternative, took refuge in Jutiā fort (S.K.Bhuyan (ed.) op.cit. Vol.I, p.381).

165 S.K.Bhuyan (ed.), op.cit., pp.293-322.

166 Ibid., p.521; The Tuzuk-i-Jahāngirī, Vol.II tr. by A.Rogers, ed. by H.Beveridge, 2nd ed., New Delhi, 1968, p.2.

167 S.K.Bhuyan ed. op.cit., ^{vol. II} p.521.

168 Ghosal, op.cit., p.130ff.

169 S.N.Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p.161.

170 Loc.cit.

171 Ibid., p.251.

- 172 Stephen Cacella calls the prince Gabur Shah
(Gaburra) C. Wessels, Early Jesuit Travellers
in Central Asia, 1603-1721, pp. 126, 127, 131.
- 173 Journal of Numismatic Society of India, Vol. XXXI II, pp. 129-31
The Numismatic Circular, London, 1981, pp. 115ff.
- 174 Ghosal, op.cit., p. 191.
- 175 S. N. Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p. 251.
- 176 H. C. Goswami (ed.), Purāni Assam Burañi, p. 113.
- 177 S. K. Bhuyan (ed.), Kāmarūpar Burañi, p. 40.
- 178 L. Devi, op.cit., p. 236.
- 179 S. K. Bhuyan (ed.) Assam Burañi (SM), Gauhati, 1945, p. 87.
Also see Amanatulla, op.cit., p. 156.
- 180 Amanatulla, op.cit., p. 157.
- 181 S. N. Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p. 299.
- 182 H. C. Goswami (ed.), op.cit., p. 115.
- 183 S. K. Bhuyan ed. op.cit., pp. 89-90; H. C. Goswami, op.cit.,
pp. 115-17, S. K. Bhuyan ed. Kāmarūpar Burañi,
pp. 52-53.
- 184 The date is given in Kāmarūpar Burañi, S. K. Bhuyan
(ed.), p. 53.
- 185 J. N. Sarkar, The Life of Mirisula, 2nd ed., Delhi, 1969, p. 289.
- 186 H. C. Goswami, op.cit., pp. 117-18.
- 187 J. N. Sarkar, op.cit., 2nd ed., p. 285.
- 188 Ibid., p. 287.
- 189 Ibid., p. 305. *S. N. Bhattacharyya, op.cit.*

190 J.N.Sarkar, op.cit., p. 287.

Cf. On the night of 1st November, 1661, Mir Jumla and Dilirkhān started from Khispur with a powerful army of 12,000 horse, and 30,000 foot, together with a vast flotilla of war-boats numbering at least 323. The most powerful of them were the Ghurabs or floating batteries in charge of the Dutch, each towed by 4 Kusas (long row-boats) and carry 14 guns and a crew of 50 or 60 men.

See J.N.Sarkar, ^{Loc. cit} op.cit., p. 287.

Many other sailors and gunners accompanied him.

J.N.Sarkar (ed.), The History of Bengal, p. 346.

191 S.C.Ghosal, op.cit., p. 335.

The book supplies us with the names of three routes - Morang, Bākdwar and Raṅgāmati each entering into the Koch Bihar Capital.

192 Annes Zahan Syed, Aurangzeb in Muntakhab-al-lubab, Bombay, 1977, p. 182.

193 J.N.Sarkar, The Life of Mir Jumla, p. 287.

194 Annes Zahan Syed, op.cit., pp. 184-85.

195 J.N.Sarkar, op.cit., p. 288;

J.N.Sarkar (ed.), History of Bengal, p. 346.

196 Khāfi Khān, Munta Khebu-l lubab, in the History of India, Elliot and Dowson, Vol. VII, First Indian Ed, 1964, p. 265.

J.N.Sarkar, The Life of Mir Jumla, p. 289.

197 J.A.S.B., Vol. 41, 1872, pp. 80-81.

198 Khāfi Khān, op.cit., p. 268.

- 199 Fathiyya, Continuation, p.110 as quoted by
S.N.Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p. 309 fn.
- 200 Loc.cit.
- 201 Ibid., p. 310.
- 202 L.Devi, op.cit., p. 241.
- 203 Ibid., pp. 242-43.
- 204 Ibid., p. 243.
- 205 Ibid., p. 244.
- 206 Ghosal, op.cit., p. 210.
- 207 Loc.cit.
- 208 L.Devi, op.cit., p. 244.
- 209 Ghosal, op.cit., pp. 210-211.
- 210 L.Devi, op.cit., pp. 247-48.
- 211 S.N.Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p. 12.
- 212 Ghosal, op.cit., p. 217;
S.N.Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p. 312; L.Devi, op.cit.
p. 248.
- 213 L.Devi, op.cit., p. 249.
- 214 S.H.Askari, An Unknown Phase of Mughal-Koch Relations,
Published in the Indian Historical Records Commission,
Proceedings Vol. 17(1940), pp. 139-48. However, in the
period when these letters are assigned to have been
written, we do not find the appointment of a Faujdar
entrusting on him to look after the administration ^{of} the
Koch Bihar kingdom. If the letters were written in the
first phase of the 18th Century, then it will fall in

The reign period of Rūpanārāyaṇa (1704-14) A.D.)

which however does not prove by other sources. It may be stated that Rūpanārāyaṇa fought against the Faujdar (obviously of Rangpur, See Ghosal, *op.cit.*, p.222) and following the former's defeat a treaty was concluded between them. As treaty provisions, the *Chāklās* of Bodā Pātgrāma and Pūrvabhāga were ceded to the Muslim in 1711 A.D. But the Zamindary right was retained by the Rājā of Koch Bihar on payment of annual tribute as stated earlier.

215 Ghosal, *op.cit.*, p.222.

216 *Loc.cit.*; S. N. Bhattacharyya, *op.cit.*, p.315.

217 Ghosal, *op.cit.*, p.223.

218 *Ibid.*, p.226.

Ghosal says that possibly the aforesaid nazar and Peshkash were given in connection with the Zamindary of the king under the Mughal dominion, comprising the three *Chāklās* of Bodā, Pātgrāma and Pūrvabhāga. 'Rajah Rupanarayana of Cooch Behar held three pargannahs as Zamindar under Mughalraj; hence the Peshkash (tribute)' *Ed. A Narrative of Bengal*, p. fn 33.

219 Nikhilmath Ray, *Murshidabad Itihāsa*, p.357.

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CHAPTER III

RELIGION

It is difficult to trace the history of religions of the people of Kāṁṁṁ-Koch Bihar from early times. It has, however, already been pointed out that they are part of the Bodo Community¹ who formed a section of the Tibeto-Burman race, and who came under the influence of Sanskritic culture in the early centuries of the Christian era.² With the contact with the non-aryan peoples, the sanskritic religion underwent radical changes in view of the adoption of deities, religious myths and cults derived from the races beyond the aryan domain. The popularity of Saivite religion among the different races of northern and eastern India may be noticed since the days of the Mahābhārata.³

The chinese traveller Hiuēn Tsang who visited Kāmarūpa at the beginning of the 7th century A.D. having crossed a large river identified with the Karatoyā, which has already been noted as the westernmost boundary of Kāmarūpa, did not come across any Buddhist monastries.⁴ Hiuēn Tsang noticed, however, that the people were predominantly followers of Brahmanical religions and believed in the efficacy of the sacrifices of birds and beasts at the temples.⁵

It is interesting to note in this connection that

Durlabhanārāyaṇa⁶ (C 13th century A.D.) and the rulers of the Khen dynasty (C 15th century A.D.)⁷ who had been ruling Kāmātā-Kāmarūpa region, were also champions of the Brahmanical religion. It is generally believed that Nīlāvara, a member of the Khen dynasty brought a large number of Brāhmanas and Kāyasthas into his kingdom from Mithilā and the neighbouring territories.⁸ The early records of Kāmarūpa contain references to immigration of the Brāhmanas from Madhyadesā.^{8(a)} The practice of inviting Brāhmanas for settlement in this region continued in later periods also.

The popularity of Śiva, however, never completely waned through the vicissitudes of time, and it reasserted its position at the time of accession of Viśvasiṃha, the founder of Koch Kingdom (C at the beginning of the 15th century A.D.). Like most of the founders of the ruling Hindu dynasties of India of this period, it was claimed that Viśvasiṃha sprang from Śiva, the God having taken the form of one of their ancestors and visited the queen who was herself none other than incarnation of Pārvatī.⁹

Viśvasiṃha took initiation into the Saiva tenet under guidance of a Brāhmana named Kālīcarana Bhattacharyya, specially brought for this purpose.¹⁰ In the Vaisāvalis of Koch Bihar and Darrang, he was considered to have been the son of Mahādeva, and so also in the Śāṅkara Carit of Rāma Carana Thākura (16th century).¹¹ Abul Fazl, the historian,

a contemporary of the son of Viśvasimha was Hindu.¹² It may be mentioned here that Gunabhiram Barua in Āṣm̄ Burañī refers to a king named, Jalpesvara of North Bengal who introduced Śiva worship for the first time in early Assam.¹³ 'There is a legend that a temple was originally erected on the site of the present Jalpesvara temple (in Jalpaiguri, West Bengal) by a king named Jalpa in whose time the lingam known after him (i. e. Jalpesvara) first appeared.'¹⁴ Again, the Skandha Purāna (Aventya-Khaṇḍa, Shatshastitamoḍhyāya records that the king, Jalpa was a Śiva-worshipper. The river Jatodā has been shown to have passed by the Jalpeśa (possibly Jalpesvara) Linga in the Kālikapurāna.¹⁵ But the identification of Jatodā is not, however, certain.¹⁶

From the Kālikapurāna it is also known that Śiva was regarded as the guardian deity of the province before Naraka introduced the cult of the Mother Goddess into Kāmarūpa.¹⁷ It is interesting note in this connection that the Jalpesvara Linga is being worshipped by the priestly families belonging to the Koch race from an early time. N.N.Vasu, however, draws our attention to a quotation of the Padmapurāna according to which a Brāhmaṇa is not permitted to worship the Śiva-linga.¹⁸

Some of the subsequent Koch Kings were influenced by Saivism. Ripuñjaya Dāsa, in his Yamāvalī observed that Mahārājā Naranārāyana established Bānesvara Śiva (in the Kingdom of Koch Bihar).¹⁹ There are temples of Banesvara Śiva

in Bāra Bhujyān Mouza in the district of Darrang in Assam and in Uttarsaru Bangesvar Mouza, in the district of Kāmarūpa.

On his way back from Āgrā Mahārāja Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa discovered the Lolārka Kunda in Varānasi and established a Lolārkesvara Śiva there.²⁰ The worship of Jalpesvara Śiva which had since long been discontinued was again revived during the period of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa who, however, due to his sudden demise could not construct a temple.²¹

Mahārāja Prānanārāyaṇa is said to have constructed or repaired the temples of Śiva known as Sandesvara and Bānesvara. He attempted to construct the temple of Jalpesvara bringing masons from Delhi but the work remain unfinished.²²

And the unfinished temple was later on constructed by Mahārāja Modanārāyaṇa who granted 44 jotes at its Devottara property. He opened an arrangement by way of which free food was distributed among the visitors and for the expenditure an annual payment of eleven hundred coins was ensured.²³

In addition to the temples of Bānesvara and Jalpesvara, the other temples which are at present in ruined states like that Batesvara or Jatesvara or the temples of Sodarkhai situated in the same belt testify to the extent of popularity of Śaivism among the people of Kāmatā-Koch kingdom. The tribal deity, however, of the aboriginal Koch

tribe in North Bengal appears to have been identified with Rudra-Siva. King Naranārāyana is said to have offered worship to Siva according to Sāstric injunction on the eve of his expedition against the Ahoms.²⁴ The soldiers who accompanied the king in his expedition, insisted upon him to allow them to worship Siva according to their tribal customs. After King's approval, the Kachāri soldiers did the worship by the sacrifice of swine, buffaloes, he-goats, pigeons, ducks and cocks and by the offering of rice and liquor and the dancing of women (deo-dhāl). An edict offered by the King Naranārāyana on the bank of the Brahmaputra river gave a religious sanction to the performance of worship after tribal customs.²⁵ In this connection it may also be taken into account that the aboriginal Kirātas being the followers of Saivite religion confined to some gross form with wine and flesh.²⁶ Mukundaram Chakravarty narrates the story of infatuation of the Koch women for Siva.²⁷ The Saivism had its influence upon the folk songs of North Bengal. The worship of Lord Siva and performance of religious festivals started in different parts of the country. The foundation of folk-Saivism, says Ashutosh Bhattacharyya, is supposed to be erected in the in-the Koch peasants-society. It is found that even in the ancient literature of far off Bengal, Siva is associated with the Koch-women. In the prevailing folk-songs of Saivism in the whole of Bengal, the Koch women's infatuation towards Siva is well narrated.

Therefore, it is supposed that in the society of the Koch peasants where Śiva first appeared and then his character coming into contact with the features of the Koch-Society led to the emergence of a local and folk literary belief which ultimately spread over the whole of Bengal.²⁸ This also testifies to one thing that even today some of earlier tribal habits are still in existence. A curious practice of animal sacrifice is in vogue even now in Śiva temples of Koch Bihar (i.e. Cooch Behar) and Assam.²⁹

Mention has been made in the folk-songs viz. (Nil, Gāian, sarak and Gambhīra) of conferring salutation in the name of Lord Śiva. The Gambhīra folk-songs which flourished mostly in the Malda area were greatly influenced by Saivite thoughts. These Gambhīra songs also portrayed the picture of the society.³⁰

Even this Saivism was in vogue when the neo-Vaiṣṇavism was coming into limelight. It is said that Śankaradeva, himself took the name Śankara as he was born after the blessings of Gopēśvara Śiva of Singari.³¹

Śiva came to be closely associated with Sūrya in medieval period in eastern India and both stood for fertility symbol. This has explicitly been stated in the Sūrya-mangala. Pāñcālī, a literary product of the 18th century A.D. in which it is mentioned that Sūrya alias Śiva is taking stramonium and

his companions are sixteen hundred Gopīs. Sonārāy, the tiger God of Kāmatāpura did the same long before.³² This had led some scholars to believe that the Sūrya-śaṅkala-pāñcālī was influenced by the folk-song and folk-literature of Kāmatāpura.³³ It has also been suggested that the conception of Sonārāy is nothing but the admixture of Dharmathākura, Sūrya and Śiva.³⁴

In this connection we may refer to an interesting image of Sūrya, as signable to the 12th century A.D. known as 'Śiva-devāditya', now preserved in the Akshya Kumar Maitreya Museum, North Bengal University.³⁵

The worship of Śakti was predominant throughout Eastern India. Like the worship of Śiva, the worship of Śakti was equally widespread. In the words of Eliot 'the Saktist form of worship originated in Bengal and Assam. It is true that a goddess who requires to be propitiated with human victims has temples in most part of India, but Saktism in the sense of a definite sect with scriptures of its own, if not confined to the north-east corner, at least has its headquarters there'.³⁶ Traditionally the Śākta cult is considered to have its Centre in Kāmarūpa with its chief temple at Kāmakhyā.³⁷ The Kālikāpurāna supplies us with a detailed information as to the mythological background of the origin of the Yoni-pītha of Kāmakhyā.³⁸

R.P.Chanda has showed that the Saktism³⁹ originated

from various non-aryan cults. Eliot⁴⁰ thinks that the aboriginal cult of Assam which committed to the worship of Goddess with human sacrifices and a number of rites is related to Saktism. The worship of Mother Goddess was associated on certain occasion with human sacrifices among the primitive tribes of North Eastern region including the Koches.⁴¹ Gait quotes the authority of the Haft Iqlim that during every annual festival of a tribal Goddess called Āi, some Ahoms used to offer themselves for sacrifices at her alter. Such people were known as Bhogīs. It is said that those persons were allowed to do anything after their likings and supplied with nourishing food so that their body would become plump, as the Goddess was supposed to have been specially pleased with such victims.⁴² The custom of offering human sacrifices among the Koches was in vogue.⁴³ It is believed that some members of the Darrang Rāja family used to sacrifice human victims annually to the Goddess.⁴⁴ Some⁴⁵ gives detailed account of the offering of human sacrifices before the Goddess which was in practice among the Kashāris, Chutiya, Manipuris, Jaintias, Khāsis and the Tipperās. It appears that this Saktism had on it an obvious impact of tantricism. The Buddhist ideas vis., Vajrayāna, Tantrayāna etc. fell a shadow on the śākta-Śaiva tenets. There was a great resemblance with the nature of various forms of tantricism among these sects.⁴⁶

The Devī was worshipped in various forms in different places, for instance in Kānarūpa, Kūmakhyā, Bhottadesā etc.⁴⁷

The antiquity and importance of Kāmākhyā, it has rightly been pointed out, surpasses most of the shrines in other parts of India and particularly of the Eastern part.⁴⁸

But it is interesting to note that there is hardly any reference to the Śakti worship in the inscriptions discovered in Kamarūpa in earlier periods.⁴⁹

Before the advent of Neo-Vaiṣṇavism the Bāro-Bhuyāns and the ancestors of both Śaṅkaradeva and Mādhavadeva were staunch Śāktas. The worship of both the ten armed and the eight armed forms of the Devī are mentioned in the Caritas.⁵⁰

The King Nilāvara, the last ruler of Khen dynasty is said to have credited with the construction of a Matha for offering worship to the image of Goddess Bhagavatī which was recovered from a pool called Kajili Kunda.⁵¹

Viśvasiṃha is said to have worshipped Mother Goddess Durgā while he was a boy. At this, the Goddess became very much pleased and gave him a boon. He was told that he would be the King of the country. Curiously enough, after attaining the age of sixteen he defeated the Bhuyān Chiefs and became the ruler.⁵² According to a tradition Mahārāja Viśvasiṃha found an image of ten armed Durgā in a forest and brought it home.⁵³ There appears to be no difference in the forms of this image as described in the manuscripts of Vaiṣṇavalis from that of the images of Durgā that is being worshipped in Koch Bihar at

present.

Viśvasiṃha established various images all over Koch Bihar and brought learned Brāhmanas from Mithilā and Kansaj for conducting their worship.^{53a} The Brāhmanas belonged to the gotra of Vasīṣṭha. It was possibly because of this reason that Viśvasiṃha himself took the gotra of Vasīṣṭha.⁵⁴ At the request of the Chief Priest Sārvadhama, Viśvasiṃha appointed Narahari Dāsa, the descendant of Sridhara Thākura, the minister of Mithilā to the post of Prime Minister. Previously Narahari Dāsa was said to have been living in cognito at Kānākhyā.⁵⁵ It is said that Viśvasiṃha brought Vallabhāchāryya, son of Vasudeva Āchāryya of Kanyakubja, from Śrīkṣetra and appointed him as the priest of the Kānākhyā temple.⁵⁶ Viśvasiṃha is said to have built a new temple of the Goddess Kānatesvārī with brick and stone and the same was ^{said to have} destroyed by the early Muhammedan invaders.⁵⁷

It appears that Narasārāyaṇa brought Brāhmanas from Bengal for worship of the Goddess Kānākhyā and granted them Brahmottara Lands. He made a grant of sufficient Devottara land to meet the expense of the temple, and for the maintenance of the Servants.⁵⁸ It is interesting to note in this connection that the King Narasārāyaṇa constructed a Matha named Nalkhāṇṇ in which an image of a Goddess was installed and a Kachhāri was engaged as Deori (or worshipper). The Bhutiyās of Sāt Duar (Dvār), the Bhutiyās and principal subjects of Bijni and

Fulguri were summoned and an order was promulgated.⁵⁹

With the help of Śukladvaja, Mahārāja Naranārāyaṇa constructed the temple of Kāmākhya.⁶⁰ After the completion of the temple and during its consecration, Mahārāja Naranārāyaṇa with his consort Bhānumatī, and Śukladvaja with his wife Candraprabhā and the ladies married in Ganda, went in state to Nilācala.⁶¹

At the first great worship of the Goddess, many offerings were made, servants and sebahis were engaged and the various landed properties dedicated.⁶²

In the chamber adjoining the temple, where the movable images were kept, the stone images of Mahārāja Naranārāyaṇa and Śukladvaja still stand. King Prānārāyaṇa raised the temple of Bhavānī, known as Kāntesvarī at a place Gosānīmāri in Kāmatapura.⁶³ It is, however, interesting to note here that according to a tradition the members of the royal family of Koch Bihar were not permitted to visit either the goddess Kāmākhya of Nilācala or the Goddess of Bhavānī (another name of Kāmākhya) of Gosānīmāri on account of a curse of the Goddess.⁶⁴

It has been narrated by some⁶⁵ that the contemporary religious picture showed a steady decline or the disappearance of religious faiths like Buddhism, Jainism, Islam or orthodox Brahmanism in India.

Side by side, with the worship of Śiva and Durgā,

Vaiṣṇavism also made a great headway amongst the people of Koch Bihar. Śaṅkaradeva, a resident of Kāmarūpa, was born at a time when the country was infested by evil tantricism and superstitions.⁶⁶ He sharply reacted to the prevailing forms of religion. He was thus encouraged to propagate the neo-vaiṣṇavism and make an attempt to bring all sections of people in its fold.

It may be mentioned that during the period of Śaṅkaradeva the whole of India had been experiencing a religious revolution in the form of Bhakti movement under such great saintly personalities like Chaitanyadeva of Bengal (1485-1533), Vallabhaṅkārīya of Andhra and Vrajmaṅḍala (1470-1531), Kabīra of Vārāṅasī (1398-1518 or 1425-1492/1519),⁶⁷ Nanak of Punjab (1469-1539) and Tulsīdāsa of the United provinces(?) (1523-1583).

The concept of bhakti preached by the medieval saints, was developed to a large extent by the Vaiṣṇava sects during centuries of the Christian era. The basic traits of the Bhakti Cults are intense love for, and a belief in one God. Prior to the arrival of Śaṅkaradeva, as we have already seen, the land of Kāṅṣṭā-Koch Bihar was under the thorough influence of tantricism. The observation of Elliot in this respect is worth quoting, "Tantricism is a system of magical or sacramental ritual, which professes to attain the highest aims of religion by such methods as spells, diagrams, gestures and other physical exercises. One of its basis is the assumption that man and the

universe correspond as microcosm and macrocosm and that both are subject to the mysterious power/^{to words} ~~humans~~ and letters".⁶⁸ ✓

In this gross form of worship was also included the offering of blood to the Devi. Kālikāpurāna contains a list of sacrificial animals to Candikā and Bhairava.⁶⁹

"The Kathā-Guru-Carita gives an account of one Koch official named Govinda who worshipped the Devi at the cost of everything of his belongings. He then used to take out his blood with a small clipper and offer it to the Devi in shells of snails as a result of which his body turned as white as cotton".⁷⁰

"This was also accompanied by wine drinking and divination by ripping open the entrails of Pregnant women. The Tanresvari Temple ~~was the~~ was the Centre of dreadful sacrifices. Amongst her delicate offerings were included strong spirituous liquor, human sacrifice, modaka, flesh curry, coconuts and sugarcane'.⁷¹ As a result of successive Muslim invasions since the days of Bakhtiyār Khilji (13th century A.D.) and internal dissensions in the royal family during Khen period, the Koch central authority became weakened. The Ahom hostility with the Kāmata-Koch power continued during the reign of Naranārāyana with attempts of peace at intervals through matrimonial alliances.

A reference made here to the hostility between the Bhuyāns of Kāmārūpa and the Bhutiyās which made the situation

complicated.⁷² During the period of Śankaradeva who belonged to the family of one Bhuyān chief, the process of disintegration and decay of the power of the Bhuyāns had already started. Śankaradeva at a tender age took the charge of office. But before long he incurred displeasure of the Ahom king, and managed his escape and came to Barpetā where he got shelter under the Koch Kings of Kāmarūpa.⁷³ Śankaradeva not merely sharply reacted against the prevailing forms of religion like Tantricism, Nathism etc., as noticed earlier but he decried the supremacy of the Brāhmaṇas. He was not therefore liked by the contemporary Brāhmaṇas.⁷⁴

In regard to the prevalence of Vaiṣṇavism it is said that this religious creed flourished long before Śankaradeva in Assam. The history of Vaiṣṇavism may be traced from as early as the period of mythical king Naraka, son of Viṣṇu. 'The worship of Viṣṇu in the form of Hayagrīva originally associated with Agni and was probably prevalent in this region, at least in the temple of Hājo at Manikutā and probably at Kānākhyā'.⁷⁵

The Umākhala Rock inscription (C 6th century A.D.) of Maharāja Surendra Varman records the dedication of a temple to the God Balabhadra-Svāmīn, i.e. Viṣṇu.⁷⁶ Later rulers of Kāmarūpa like Dharmapāla also patronised Vaiṣṇavism.⁷⁷

In spite of the great respect shown to Vaiṣṇavism

in earlier periods, Śaṅkaradeva had to leave home and hearth for his devotion to Viṣṇu. Even in his new place at Kāmatāpūra he was, however, not at first cordially received by the Kāmatā Brāhmaṇas and the then king Naranārāyaṇa. The main allegation levelled against Śaṅkaradeva was that among his followers Kaivartas, Kalitās, Koches, Brāhmaṇas and others assembled and dined together.⁷⁸ But somehow, he became friendly with Cilārāī, the brother of Mahārāja Naranārāyaṇa, and saved himself from the persecution at the hands of the Brāhmaṇas and the Mahārāja himself.⁷⁹ Śaṅkaradeva, however, by his scholarship and his performance impressed the king Naranārāyaṇa who extended all facilities for propagating the cult of Vaiṣṇavism by Śaṅkaradeva.⁷⁹⁽¹⁾ The king further requested him to preach the gospel of Hari to the people so that the commoners, through their continuous association and devotion towards Hari may take their last breathes.⁷⁹⁽¹¹⁾ During the last few years of his life he had to keep liaison with the Koch Court which indirectly helped his religion.^{79a} He lived in Kāmatā-Koch Bihar for two years and a half.^{79b}

It is surprising to note that the Brāhmaṇas who did not welcome Śaṅkaradeva at the Kāmatā-Koch Court during the period of Naranārāyaṇa, subsequently, however, admitted his qualities and praised Śaṅkaradeva before the king saying that the religion as preached by Śaṅkaradeva was relevant to the contemporary society.^{79c}

The main philosophy of Śaṅkaradeva's neo-vaishnavism was based upon the concepts of Sravaṇa, Kīrttana, Smaraṇa, Paśa-syaṇa and Ātma-nivedana.⁸⁰ He inaugurated a society of devotees called Bhaktas and formed the worship called nāma-kīrttana or congregational worship. All classes of people irrespective of castes could join such congregations.⁸¹ He composed also the Kīrttana Kāvyaś and illustrated the teachings through the stories of the Bhāgavata. He was deeply impressed by the tradition of the Bhāgavata and considered it to be the fountain source of his cult.⁸² In several places Śaṅkaradeva relied on the authority of the Vedānta for exposition of his faith.

Śaṅkaradeva believed in the doctrine of non-dualism and he admitted that the nirguṇa Brāhmaṇa was the ultimate reality and Jiva to be one with Brāhmaṇa. In his opinion Brāhmaṇa is indeterminate (nirviśeṣa) changeless (avikāri) and eternal (nitya).⁸³

The principal schools of Vaiṣṇavism like Śrī, Brahmā, Rudra and Saṅkādī-Saṃpradāyaś 'generally rejected the doctrine of maya, regarded God as personal, and the soul as a sufficiently distinct individual, and looked forward to fellowship with God as more desirable than an absorption in him'.⁸⁴ Māyāvāda has been emphasised in Śaṅkaradeva's philosophy. In his religion Nārāyaṇa-Viṣṇukṛṣṇa-Rāma has been depicted as eternal Brāhmaṇa and people's worship and devotion for this God was stressed by him. The Jiva, being different from God is

always in the circle of māyā and as such the need of worshipping God with the love of his heart and external rites were prescribed.

Hence, the attainment to the state of Brāhmaṇa occurs as a natural outcome of release from the bondage of māyā and cycle of rebirths.⁸⁵

He was generally against idol worship, and also animal sacrifice.⁸⁶ Śaṅkaradeva never followed the Rāgānuga theory of meditation. His theory of meditation was like that of Uddhava i.e., Parābhakti theory.⁸⁷ His theory of Bhakti is the bhakti of Nārada of Purānas.

In Śaṅkaradeva's Vaiṣṇavism the bulk of non-Hindu population found an opportunity to embrace Hinduism. They adopted a disciplined life as advocated by Śaṅkaradeva.⁸⁸ All men of Koch Bihar from the highest Brāhmaṇa to the lowest Chendāla came to regard him as an incarnation of God and followed his doctrine.^{88a}

It is said that Śaṅkaradeva lived in the village Kāgajkutā when he came to Behar (i.e., Kanata-Koch Court).⁸⁹ Śaṅkaradeva, according to another view lived for some time in the town of Behar.⁹⁰ He also lived happily in Bhelā (Bhelādāngā) after opening a Satra. According to another authority Śaṅkaradeva opened a Satra at Baikantapurā and

remained there for some time.⁹¹

Mādhavadeva, the chief disciple of Śaṅkaradeva, was originally, a Tantrik by faith, but afterwards he became a devout Vaiṣṇava under the influence of Śaṅkaradeva, Mādhavadeva made a comprehensive collection of the principles of different philosophical treatises and wrote Nam Ghosa and Bhakti Ratnāvalī. 'All his spiritual findings and achievements have been inserted in his Holy "Nam-Ghosa".' He realised the God-head as follows :

"Krishna is one without a second, the Ruler of time, maya etc. the one lord who destroys all sufferings. There is no other lord superior to Him, none, never. Besides Him there are none who create, preserve and destroy the universe - know that in all the universe, Vishnu is the root and essence of all"⁹² He further says "I do not belong to the four castes nor to the four Ashramas. Neither am I pious, giving gifts and visiting sacred places. But surely do I become the servant of the ^{Lotus Feet of The} Lord of Gopis

(i.e. Krishna)⁹³ He is said to have selected one Nārāyaṇa, a person of low caste as his spiritual friend and followed his Guru's sayings - "In Bhakti there is no distinction of castes. Everybody has equal rights to chant "Hari Nama". So the temple of prayer is kept open ^{to} all. Congregational prayer known as the Hari-Prasaṅga is open to all. Anybody and everybody including female folk could join in the congregational prayer and chant the Hari-name clapping his hands in union with the musical time of the 'Tal' (symbols). This practice of unification uprooted the vanity of both".⁹⁴ The Namaghosa of Mādhavadeva

records that the Gāros, Bhūtjās, Muslims, Miri, Ahoms and Kachāris were brought to the fold of Vaiṣṇavism.⁹⁵ At the later part of his life Mādhavadeva remained at Koch Bihar and propagated his creed. He was appreciated very much by the people of Koch Bihar and a large number of them were initiated by him.⁹⁶ The king Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa helped him to set up a satra,⁹⁷ at Bhelāṅga in the state of Koch Bihar at the instance of his mother (Āidhā).⁹⁸ The gradual predominance over the people of Koch Bihar perhaps enabled him to foster a spirit of love to human as well as animal being. This slowly transformed the religious spirit of the Koch people as it has been attributed to the Koch people by Ralf Fitch, the English traveller.⁹⁹

The king Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa said, - "All people of my kingdom should follow the tenets of Mādhava. Give up all those previously followed by you, for I have come to know that the teachings of Mādhava are very pure".^{99a} It is said that the king desired to be initiated by him. But Mādhava ~~de~~ could not accept the offer.¹⁰⁰ He passed away in 1596 A.D. at Bhelāṅga in Koch Bihar.¹⁰¹

After him Dāmodaradeva, son of Sadānanda was born in village Nalchā near village Baradoyā, the place of Śrī Śaṅkaradeva, and the latter gave him the name Dāmodara. He was banished from the territory of king Parīkṣītīnārāyaṇa for his unflinching devotion to Kṛṣṇa, but was rather cordially received by the Mahārāja Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa, and constructed his

residence at Baikunthapur,¹⁰² Dāmodaradeva had a deep influence upon the people of Koch Bihar. At the advent of Dāmodaradeva in Koch Bihar, the king Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa was so delighted that he summoned all nobles and the people for expressing his pleasure on the occasion.¹⁰³ With the help of the king Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa, Dāmodaradeva constructed a satra at Bhitavudhap which ultimately came to be known as Baikunthapura.¹⁰⁴ He became the royal Guru and advised Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa not to allow slaughter of animal being in his kingdom. This animal sacrifice was prohibited for some time.^{104a}

Under the patronage of king Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa people of different walks of life of Kānata-Koch kingdom accepted vaishnavism as preached by Dāmodaradeva. In order to popularise religion, the king gave lands to potters, barbers, washermen and Goldsmith for settlement.¹⁰⁵ The king himself along with queens and ^{the} princes were initiated by Dāmodaradeva.¹⁰⁶ The city dwellers are also said to have approached Dāmodaradeva in large number for getting themselves initiated into Vaiṣṇava religion.¹⁰⁷ However, Dāmodaradeva was not a prolific writer. He is, however, known to have composed some Bargits.¹⁰⁸

Mahārāja Naranārāyaṇa is said to have been much impressed at the erudition and qualities of Śaṅkaradeva. He is said to have refuted all the charges that were brought against him by the Brāhmaṇas with great ease at a debate held in the court of King Naranārāyaṇa.¹⁰⁹ King Naranārāyaṇa wanted

to be initiated by Śaṅkaradeva. In reply, Śaṅkaradeva said that the king could not be initiated because he ^(the King) had to offer animal sacrifices to Gods and Goddesses. ¹¹⁰

Durgadas Majumder says that Mahārājā established an image of Viṣṇu under the advice of Śaṅkaradeva, and entrusted Ananta Kandalī with its worship. He gives the name of this image as Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa. ¹¹¹ In the Mahāpurāṇiṣya Vaiṣṇavism as preached by Śaṅkaradeva, Lakṣmī or Rādha is not worshipped with Nārāyaṇa as Sakti. The image of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa (known as the image of Modangmohana) in Koch Bihar also, is still being worshipped alone. The name 'Narayana' was supposed to be the presiding deity of Kāṁstā-Koch kingdom. ¹¹² It is presumed that this image or substitute for it later came to be known as Modangmohana. ¹¹³

The rulers following Viśvasiṅha embraced Vaiṣṇavism even though they had inclination towards Śaivism which has also been shown in the coin-legends, describing, the rulers of Koch dynasty as 'bee to the lotus feet of Śiva' (Cf. Śiva-Caraṇa-Kaṁala-Madhū Karasya). ¹¹⁴

Śaṅkaradeva and Caitanya

It is interesting to note in this connection that Śaṅkaradeva made pilgrimages to different holy places of India where it is said that he had talks with religious personalities

and exchanged his views. His association with Caitanyadeva, the great Vaisnava reformers of Bengal may be discussed in the light of available evidence. ^{114a}

In the recent times Kali Ram Medhi, a celebrated writer of Assam is supposed to have made the following observation in his articles published recently by Assam Sahitya Sabha. ¹¹⁵

'Sri Sankaradeva happened once to see Sri Caitanyadeva from a distance in Puri during his second pilgrimage at the age of about 85 years; but he had no talk with him. In the circumstances Sankaradeva had no occasion or opportunity to receive Prema-Bhakti or any inspiration from Caitanyadeva. During his second pilgrimage his principal follower, Sri Madhavadeva with hundreds of Bhaktas accompanied him. He had begun preaching his Bhakti cult many years before this period. During his first pilgrimage which commenced in his 25th year Caitanyadeva was not born'.

'Sankaradeva was born in 1449 A.D. and Caitanyadeva in 1486 A.D. i.e. the former was 36 years older than the latter'.

Another historian of Assam, Maheshwar Neog also mostly supports the thesis of Medhi and considers the meeting of Sankaradeva with Caitanyadeva, as suggested by some biographers, as 'only a figment of pious imagination'. ¹¹⁶

Some scholars also hold a similar view as they believe that Caitanyadeva was born after Śaṅkaradeva's first pilgrimage and died prior to his second sojourn.¹¹⁷

S.K.Dey holds that the absence of the name of Śaṅkaradeva in Vaiṣṇava literature of Bengal may justify the assumption that Śaṅkaradeva never met Caitanyadeva.¹¹⁸ It is, however, possible that Bengal School of Vaiṣṇavism developed an indifferent attitude towards the Assamese Vaiṣṇavism which accepted Kṛṣṇa and discarded Rādhā, while the former had advocated the Rādhā Cult in most laudable terms.

It is generally believed that Śaṅkaradeva was born in 1449 A.D. It may be noted here that the Caritapūthīs of Rāmacaraṇa, Daityārī, Bhūṣaṇa, Rāma Rāya or Nīlakaṇṭha do not supply us with any specific information about the incident.

Dāmodaradeva,¹¹⁹ a disciple of Śaṅkaradeva, as noted earlier, ^{Spent} the last seven years of his life at Baikānthapura.¹²⁰ After the death of Dāmodaradeva his other disciples decided to perform his Śrāddha ceremony at Pāṭbānsī in the Brahmaputra Valley. But having heard this news Vīraṇārāyaṇa, the heir-apparent, brought the persons before the king Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa who then ordered to perform the Śrāddha in his kingdom. It appears that Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa spent most of his time outside his kingdom and also at Hājo. He perhaps returned to his kingdom (Koch Bihar) not long before his death which occurred in 1626-27 A.D. and

might have been present in his kingdom at the time of Dāmodaradeva's death,¹²¹ Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa's son and successor Vīranārāyaṇa ascended the throne after his death possibly in 1548 Śaka (1626-27 A.D.) when he struck his coin.¹²²

Dāmodaradeva is said to have lived for 110 years, hence his date of birth may be placed around 1518 A.D. It is generally believed that Śaṅkaradeva was senior to Dāmodaradeva by 39 years¹²³ and this will take the date of Śaṅkaradeva's birth to c. 1477 A.D., which, however, incidentally coincides the date of Śaṅkaradeva's birth as postulated by Edward Gait.¹²⁴

Śaṅkaradeva set out on his pilgrimage for the first time when he is said to have been 32 years old.¹²⁵ He spent twelve years for this purpose during when he visited Puri. He perhaps met Caitanyadeva in Puri and returned to Kāmarūpa before 1535 A.D.¹²⁶

Caitanyadeva, incidentally, was born in 1485-86 A.D. and he renounced the world and became an ascetic at the age of twentythree. He went to Puri in 1510 A.D. after becoming an ascetic.¹²⁷ He spent most of his time in Puri from 1515 A.D. till his death in 1533 A.D.¹²⁸

There is thus every possibility that both Śaṅkaradeva and Caitanyadeva met together at Puri. Their meeting has actually been taken notice by such contemporary writers as Rāma Carana, Daityāri and Bhūṣaṇa. We come across a detailed

description of this meeting in the Deva-Dāmodara-Carita, although the venue of the same has been stated to be in Nadiyā :

Cf. Kato belī Guiko Guī Cāi Bahilanta |
Caitanyak mātiā śāṅkare Ḍulilanta ||
Dīā nām mālak Samasta tamū thāi |
Āmāro tomāt bing ān Keḥo nāi ||

V. 281

Sunīā Caitanyadevā takhane uṭhila |
Śāṅkarak ālingiā abhyantare gallā ||

V. 282

Abhyantare ^{du}yojane sabē Kathā bhalla |

It thus appears both Śāṅkaradeva and Caitanyadeva met each other and talked privately for a considerable time. They understood and appreciated each other's point of view.¹²⁹

It may be mentioned in this connection that Dinesh Chandra Sen¹³⁰ drew our attention to an old hand-written Assamese painted manuscript in which both Śāṅkaradeva and Caitanyadeva have been shown as seated and Caitanyadeva in the role of expounding something to Śāṅkaradeva who is also listening with great reverence.

Some scholars¹³¹ however, believe that Śāṅkaradeva

met Caitanyadeva during his second pilgrimage which commenced from Pāṭhānsī during the reign of Naranārāyaṇa, the king of Kāṁstāpura, who ascended the throne in 1555 A.D. But it is generally accepted that Caitanyadeva died in 1533 A.D. Hence, a meeting between the two was not possible during the second pilgrimage of Śaṅkaradeva.

Śaṅkaradeva and Caitanyadeva were thus contemporaries.

The socio-cultural conditions of this period seem to have paved the path of the rise of the Neo-Vaiṣṇavism of these two religious leaders. Both of them reacted sharply to the prevailing forms of religions in their respective areas. Caitanyadeva is said to have instructed his beloved disciple Nityānanda to initiate all sections of people rich or poor, depressed or downtrodden irrespective of their caste, creed and religion to the new Vaiṣṇava religion.¹³² Śaṅkaradeva also made similar attempt bringing all sections of people within the fold of his Neo-Vaiṣṇavism.¹³³

It may be said that both Śaṅkaradeva and Caitanyadeva derived their sustenance from Śrīmad-Bhāgavat-gītā and Bhāgavata. Both the sants were saturated with love for the Divine and sought to transfer the life of the people through the propagation of Divine love. Both proclaimed the supremacy and universality of the path of devotion over the way of arid knowledge.

Saṅkaradeva says -

Harika bhakti ohi parama sampad¹³⁴

(i.e. Hari bhakti is the main thing)

Yāhe bhakti tāhe mukuti

bhakti e tattva jāna¹³⁵

(i.e. where there is bhakti, there is salvation; know this theory of bhakti).

Caitanyadeva sings -

Trṇadapi sunicena taroriva sahjanunā |

Amānina mānadena kirttaniya

sadā Hariḥ ||

(i.e. Respect to all creators who are the manifestations of Kṛṣṇa. He who takes the name of Kṛṣṇa, will proceed towards Kṛṣṇa).¹³⁶

Again,

Na dhanaṁ Janaṁ na sunderīm

Kabitāva Jagadīsa Kānaye |

Mama janmani janmani svare bhavata-ḍbhakti =

rahituki tvayi ||

(i.e. I do not want wealth, men, learning nor poetic power; please give me pure and steadfast devotion only to thy feet throughout my births).¹³⁷

The both regarded Śrī-Kṛṣṇa as the ultimate reality,

the world as well as the individual selves as manifestations of His inscrutable power and conditions of His sportive activity and devotion to the Lord as the highest goal of life. ✓

It is again natural when the two great minds met each other they interchange their ideas and in the process they influence each other's thoughts.

It is believed that Caitanya created a new way of worshipping Kṛṣṇa and it is known as Saṅkīrtana

(Cf. Bhaktācāryya Kabe-tomār śaśatya vacana |

Caitanyar Śrīti oi prema-Saṅkīrtana /).¹³⁸ He also composed

the Kṛṣṇa-mantra (Cf. Hari Haraye namaḥ Kṛṣṇa Yādavaya namaḥ¹³⁹

Govāla Govinda Rama Sri-madhusudana) which is befit of the

name of Rādhā and is comparable to the nāṁ-kīrtana introduced

by Śaṅkaradeva (Cf. Karīo Harir Cagane rati Kalit Harir nāṁte gati).¹⁴⁰

In this respect Caitanyadeva appears to be the path-finder.

Caitanyadeva advocated pure bhakti attainable through five different bhāvas e.g., śānta, dāsyā, sakhya Vātsalya and mādhurya. Śaṅkaradeva, however, accepted only dāsyā, sakhya and also perhaps Vātsalya bhāvas ;¹⁴¹

Cf. Śravaṇa-Kīrtana-Smarana

Viṣṇur = arccana-pada-sebana |

Dāsyā Saṅhitya Vandana Viṣṇut

Kariva dāha arpana ||

But inspite of Caitanya's emphasis of Rādhāhood

i. e. Prasabdhakti, he stressed the need of absolute continence in one's personal life and behaviour. He never faltered to chastise even his nearest, disciple for the slightest fault. He left Haridāsa for good¹⁴² on such an account :

Haridasa Kaila Prakṛti Sambhāṣana ।

Herite na pari mui tāhār Vadana ॥

Sankaradeva was also a strict disciplinarian. He perhaps thought that it will not be possible on the part of common folk to raise the standard of love to a celestial height ascribing their lovers as Veda Mala Gayatri? So he promulgated that the devotees should worship Kṛṣṇa as his Dāsa (i. e. servant).

Lastly, Kṛṣṇa-yātrā in Bengal reached its fullest development under the influence and patronage of Caitanyadeva and in Kāśatā under the influence of Sankaradeva and Nādhavadeva. Caitanyadeva himself actually used to participate in such dramatic performances. It has rightly been said that Yātrā was the main sources of public entertainment and national amusement in Bengal and drama was driven to the neighbouring provinces,¹⁴³ including perhaps the kingdom of Kāśatā-Koch Bihar.

It appears Sankaradeva also met Guru Nānak another great religious preacher in Medieval India.¹⁴⁴

Sankaradeva and Guru Nānak

Guru Nānak, the founder of Sikhism is said to have visited Kāmarūpa, possibly meaning the western most part of

present day Assam. ¹⁴⁵

Guru Nānak, then visited Kāmākhyā and other Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist Shrines on the occasion of religious festivals. ^{145a} He also stayed at Dhubri where there was a Gurudwara named Dandamā and the Sikhs of the Guru were known as Dandamians. ¹⁴⁶

Regarding the visit of Guru Teg Būhādūr who came in the company of Rājā Rām Singh ^{Sinha} of Amber, leading the Moghal army of Aurangzeb against the Ahom king of Assam, the records are kept in Macauliffe's book. ¹⁴⁷ And it is said that after Śankaradeva's death, there flourished the chanting of the Nāma Dharma, Kirtana Bhajana in the Assam villages which attracted Teg Būhādūr who came here when the Mughals invaded Assam. ¹⁴⁸ An interesting point is aroused in connection with Guru Nānak's meeting with Śankaradeva, the Vaiṣṇava reformer of Assam. There is a well-grounded tradition that he met Guru Nānak and Kabīr. ¹⁴⁹ Śankaradeva was in Assam when Guru Nānak visited the province and a meeting between the two possibly happened as an ultimate outcome. Guru Nānak spent a whole year in this region when Śankaradeva was living and preaching his mission here. ¹⁵⁰ This idea has also been corroborated by the writings of S.S. Kohli, ¹⁵¹ while he says, "Guru Nānak met Śankaradeva at Dhubri, who had come from Barpeta. Both of them discussed the mainpoints of their faith. Śankaradeva's faith is known as Ekasarana Dharma and his sect is called Mahapurusa sect. Ekasarana Dharma lay emphasis on the dasya aspect of the devotion to God,

while Chaitanyadeva's Bhakti is based on Madhurbhava (or the love of a married woman)? ✓

Two factors strongly indicate that there was some personal influence of the Founder of Sikhism on Śaṅkaradeva. This is the only Vaiṣṇava sect in India the mode of worship of which strongly resembles with the faith preached by the Sikh Gurus. Like the Sikhs they revere the word of God, the Holy Book.

In this case we may refer to an incident just on the eve of Mādhvadeva's death when his disciples came to him with the request to nominate his successor. He is said to have replied that it would be the best thing if they take Nāma Ghoṣā as their guide because he had employed all his energies and intellect in composing it. They would find him (i.e. Mādhvadeva) if they know how to seek him.¹⁵² In another book Kathā-Guru Carita, it is said that Mādhvadeva advised his disciples to regard Kīrtana and Dasana as representatives of Śaṅkara and the Ratnāvalī and Nāma Ghoṣā as his own.¹⁵³ And these holy books, perhaps raised to a prominent status and took the place of Idol or the diety. The seat on which the holy books are kept known as the Guru-āsana and all religious functions are held before this holy seat.¹⁵⁴ The permanent religious organisation was consisted of the Sātras. The Nāma Ghoṣā became the object of their worship and propaganda.^{154a} The Sikhs also have their holy scriptures Guru Granth Sahib.^{154b} And it is for that reason that in the Arati of this sect Guru Nānak's name is mentioned.

of caste distinction, absence of idols and images and pictures, burning of incense before the pedestral tray on which are placed the holy scriptures, congregation singing of Kirtana (or Bhaiana) and chanting of Names Divine are other features that took their origin from the same psychology and ground by mutual adoption and assimilation among the devotee in the Punjab and Assam".¹⁵⁸ It is found that in Sukhmani the book written by the fifth Sikh Guru among ^{contains} coin-twins like the Nam-Ghosha - unique verses on the glory and efficacy of chanting and remembering the names Divine.^{158a}

M. Neog¹⁵⁹ also equates the thing while he says, Nānak appointed his follower Lehna or Angad as his successors in preference to his sons, Śrī Chānd and Lakṣmī Dās, and Śaṅkaradeva nominated his disciple Mādhavadeva as his apostle without a thought in the matter for his two sons, Rāmahanda and Hari Chārana. He further postulates that the protests levelled against the Assam Vaiṣṇavism for inter-dining which reminds some one of the Sikhs' Catholic guru's Langar.^{159a}

S. K. Chatterjee, while commenting on the faith of Śaṅkaradeva says, "Śaṅkaradeva's Eka-Saraṇa Dharma, or Mahāpuruṣa sect as it is also called (because its leaders beginning with Śaṅkara Deva were great men - Mahāpuruṣa - by virtue not of birth but of faith in God) agreed more with the robust and manly path favoured by Kabīr and Nānak and later by Tulsīdāsa : it was the path of a man's straightforward faith in his

master, without his assuming the nature of a woman". 160

Saṅkaradeva and Islamism

Again, it has also been suggested by some that the Vaiṣṇavism as propagated by Saṅkaradeva has some resemblance with the concepts of Islam. 161 With the abrogation of idolatry of any kind and the dualistic conception of God as Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa or Gopī Kṛṣṇa and also with the glorification of human life and the world, the Bhakti Cult of Saṅkaradeva seems to have conformed greatly to Islam. It has rightly been suggested that it was for these qualities Saṅkaradeva's Vaiṣṇavism could not only attract Muslims to be its votaries, but also 'rouse the profound feelings of admiration as well as respect among the Hindus and Musalmans of Assam for each other's religion, and thus succeeded in forging a sustaining fraternity between the communities even during the long period of evergrowing hostilities and war of Assam with the Muhammadans of India'. 162

The pāmādhama of Saṅkaradeva has taken by name to be a substitute for 'Kalima' (qulma) in the Assamese sikirs. 163

According to the Kathā Gura Carita, Saṅkaradeva met grand daughter of Kabīr during his second pilgrimage. 164 At that time he might have acquired some knowledge on Kabīr's life and works.

Kabīr's teachings ^{are based mainly} bear on some influence of Islam and Hinduism. Hence it was not unlikely that Saṅkaradeva also

had in his Vaisnavism some elements borrowed from the songs of Kabir and other things.¹⁶⁵ Chāndkhan, the Muslim disciple of Śaṅkaradeva, is sometimes identified with or known as Kabir.¹⁶⁶

It is, however, difficult to form a concrete idea of the Islamic influence upon the thoughts and concepts of Śaṅkaradeva. But it may be pointed out that during that period, the monothetic ideal of Islamism had obvious reflections upon the contemporary thoughts and religious beliefs. As we have seen before that both the Mahāpuruṣā of Śaṅkaradeva and Sikhism of Nānak believe in monothetic approach towards God and consequently negation of idolatry. And it was perhaps because of the relation developed between Islam and Bhakti, and the Eksarana Dharma of Śaṅkaradeva which conforms to the monothetic ideal of Islam, there was a very insignificant converts to Islam in this region. From the census report of 1872 A.D. the total number of Muslim population was altogether 1,78,109. It is said that the total strength of Muslim in Assam was less than 1/17th of the entire Muslim population in the country. Thus it is found that the Muslim who entered this region as early as 1305-06 A.D. could not procure any large number of local converts in Assam. On the contrary, from an account of Shihābuddin Talish who visited Assam in the middle of the seventeenth century it is learnt that the early Muslim settlers of Assam became the victims of local influences so much so that they lost everything of Islam save the name.¹⁶⁷

Folk Deities ✓

Certain other deities were offered worship by the inhabitants of the area under study. The people use to worship them still today.

Every village has its seat of its God, where the Dogs or evil spirits are supposed to reside; and whenever anything goes wrong in a family, they take offerings to that place of worship in order to appease the wrath of the Dog.

Every year, on the fourteenth day of the moon, in the month of Chaitra (February), the Rājasthānī worship Madan Kāndan, the god of love. Large, straight bamboos, covered with red cloth, and surmounted by chamsars (yaks'tails)', are erected in the court-yard, and great rejoicing prevails. Songs of a loose description used to be sung on this occasion. The worship is continued for three days, and on the fourth day the cloth is taken off the bamboos and thrown away.

A singular relic of old superstition is the worship of the God called Madan-Dog. The women of a village assemble together in some distant and solitary place, no male being allowed to be present at the rite, which is always performed at night; a plantain or a young bamboo is stuck in the ground, and the women, throwing off their garments, dance round the mystic tree, singing old songs and charms. This rite is

more especially performed when there is no rain, and the crops are suffering from drought.

The people also worshipped Balarāma which is not very common in other parts of Bengal. It was worshipped on every festive occasion, such as, the tonsure ceremony, marriage or adoption in the family. It may be pointed out here that Balarāma who is known as Haladhara (i.e. holder of plough) for his association with agriculture, possibly stands for fertility cult. The gods peculiar to this class of Hindus are Saṅyasi, Daṅg-dhara and Buri-Thakurani. Some wild animals, such as, tigers, crocodiles and some objects of nature, such as, trees and rivers, are still being worshipped.

If a man is without children, he supplicates the God Kārtika. This deity is worshipped on the last day of the month of Kārtika (October). After the offerings have been duly made, all the male-kind retire from the place, and the young women of the neighbourhood assemble together, putting off their clothes, dance round the idol throughout the whole night with rataplan or drums being held during the whole time by the musicians, who are shut up in a closed shed.

The snake goddess, Biṣṭ Harā (poison destroyer), is also very largely worshipped by the people. This is the more strange, as there are few poisonous snakes in Koch Bihar.

When Cholera or small-pox prevail, the women go

about from place to place, and beg for alms. The dole thus obtained is expended in making offerings to the Dees, or evil spirits, through whose malign influence manking is supposed to be afflicted by diseases of all sorts. These worship may be classed under folk religions of this region, although some of these worships are closely associated with Purānic religious rites.

Thus it is observed that Koch Bihar is a place where various religions took their position side by side without causing any harm to each other. Religious harmony was the most peculiar character in the dynastic history of Koch Bihar. The harmony in terms of Hindu-Muslim relationship is worthy of mention.

The well-known Āstānās of Muhammedan Pirs in the capitals of Hindu kings viz. Kamatāpura, Dhaliyābāri and Koch Bihar, suggest that the pirs resided in those places receiving honour, and practised their devotional exercises and preached their religion without fear of oppression. The different pirs who started preaching Islam religion in Kamatā-Koch Bihar from the first phase of the 13th century A.D. Of them the names of Gāsi pīr, Shāh Garīb Kamāl, Shāh Fakir, Torsāpīr, Satya, Pīr, Pāglā pīr and Pīr Ekānasul Hoque are worthy of mention.^{167a} Pīrpal (lands granted to meet the expenses of the Dargās) was given to these Muslim Preachers.^{167b} 'The Muslims', as we get from the Coch Behar State and its land revenue settlement, are

mostly of the Shia sect; they offer presents to Pirs and have Dargas. They observe the Maharam festival and go out in procession with the tazia. There are Ferajis or wahabis also who refrain from the observance of rites and festivals and have no music on social ceremonies. They content themselves with simply doing the Namaj or prayer in the jomba ghar or Masjid. 169

Notes and References

1 S.K.Chatterjee, Kirāta-Jana-Kṛti, p. 148; Also Supra Chapter I, Calcutta, 1974.

2 S.K.Chatterjee, Origin and Development of Bengali Language, p. 29, Vol. I, First Pub., Calcutta University Press, 1926, First Pub. by George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1970.

S.K.Chatterjee, ^{again} however, in his ^{another} book entitled

'The Place of Assam in the History and Civilisation of India'; Gauhati University, 1970, pp. 18-19, stated that 'by the early centuries of the Christian era, Assam as Prāgyjyotisa and Kāmarūpa had become definitely a part of Hindu India, although the masses of its people were probably still Bodo-speaking, as in 16th century North Bengal among the Koches'.

3 The Mahābhārata refers to a tradition in which Lord Śiva in the garb of a Kirāta hunter defeated Arjuna, the epic hero and follower of Kṛṣṇa (Vasudeva) cult.

Ṛgveda-Dwālpāyana Vyāsa, The Mahābhārata,

(Saṁhita Dāvya & Yajur Dāvya, Vol. II, Pt. I, 2nd ed.), Eng. tr. from original Sanskrit by P.C. Roy, Calcutta, pp. 87-89.

4 Watters, On Yuān Chūāng's Travels in India, Vol. II, pp. 184 ff.

5 S.C. Ghosal, A History of Cooh Behar (Eng. tr.), p. 121.

6 Ibid., p. 45.

H.N. Dutta Baruah (ed.) 'Guru Garita', by Rāmacarāna

Thākura, p. 11.

7 Ibid., pp. 45ff.

8 W.W. Hunter, Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol. X,
Kuch Behar, p. 344.

We come to know from 'Guru Garita' of Rāma-
Charaṇa Thākura that during the period of the Khen rulers,
there was the importation of Kayastha-Brahmanas from

Kananj. See op. cit., 16ff.

8a J.A.B.S., Vol. III, 1941, pp. 113ff.

9 Yogini Tantra, XIII Slokas, 2-19.

10 Gandharvanārāvaner Vaiśāvalī, p. 52.

N.N. Pal (ed.), Mahārāja Vaiśāvalī, (Bengali), p. 3.

11 S.C. Ghosal, op. cit., p. 105.

12 W.W. Hunter, op. cit., p. 404.

13 G.R. Barua, ^{Isām Burañji} op. cit., p. 32.

14 Allen, Gait & Howard, Gazetteer of Bengal and North
Eastern India, Delhi, Reprinted, 1979, p. 224.

15 Cf. Kālikāpurāṇa, Ch. 77, V. 9.

16 The Rāmaganj Copper plate of Īśvaraghoṣa contains a
reference to a river named Jatodā near Dekkari, which
has been identified with same region either in Burdwan-Katwa,
in Jalpaiguri-Cooch Behar, or in Kāmarūp-Goālpārā (Assam).
D.C. Sircar, Pala-Sena Yuger Vaiśāvanarita (in Bengali),
Calcutta, 1982, p. 146.

17 Cf. Kālikāpurāṇa, Chāp. XXXVIII, V. 96.

18 Cf. 'A Brahmana should never worship the Siva-Linga.
Water, rice, flower, leaf & C. offered to this deity should
should never be accepted by him. Should any Brahmana violate

these injunctions and worship Linga, he shall at once fall from the rank of the Brahmana'.

N.H. Vasu, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 60.

19 N. Paul (ed.), op.cit., p. 6.

'According to another view the Asura Bāna, well-known in the Purānas, established the Śiva in his own name and king Nīlāvara constructed the temple'.

In the Yoginī Tantra there is mention of a Śiva established near Manikṭā (Hājo). Yoginī Tantra, Uttarakhaṇḍa, Navamapatala, p. 101.

Also see S. Ghosal, op.cit., p. 161.

20 N.N. Paul (ed.), op.cit., p. 12.

'Lolarka is a celebrated Sun God of India. This old Kunda (well) is dedicated in his name. There is a tradition that bathing in the water of the well, cures leprosy. Later on Maharaja Sibendranārāyaṇa again repaired this well and erected a memorial tablet with an inscription (1250 B. S.)'.

S. C. Ghosal, op.cit., fn p. 139.

21 N.N. Paul (ed.), op.cit., p. 13.

'According to another view Śukladhvaja, brother of the Mahārāja Naranārāyaṇa, being so ordered in a dream went with Kumāra Lakṣminārāyaṇa and discovered the Linga

of Śiva in Jalpeśvara and constructed a temple there'.

Durgādās-Majumdāra, Rāja Vaiśāvalī, p.63 (

22 Ibid., p. 206.

23 Jalpeśvara Mandir Committee, Jalpeśvara Mandir Itihāsa (Bengali)
pp. 23-25.

24 B.K. Barna, A Cultural History of Assam (Early Period),
Gauhati, 1969, p. 165

25 Loc. cit.

26 B. Kakati, The Mother Goddess Kamakhya, p. 162.

On the authority of the Yoginī Tantra, B. Kakati says that Śiva was considered as a Bhairava who could be adored with extreme left-handed (Vānā cāra) practices. See B. Kakati; ^{opcit}, p. 162. We learn from (Assam Burāñji S.M., art 33) See B. Kakati, op. cit., p. 22) an old chronicle that people used to worship a stone image of Bhairava on the day previous to their marriage with the offering of eight pairs of ducks, eight pairs of pigeons, twenty rupees, and other things. In case of a poor people, an offering of five rupees was fixed.

27 R.C. Majumder (ed.), The Mughal Empire, Vol. VII, Gauhati.
Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan Series, p. 641.

28 A. Bhattacharyya, Bāngla Bāngal Kāvya Itihāsa (Bengali)
6th ed., Calcutta, 1975, pp. 185-87.

According to some, different Saivite emblems viz. ox, snake, liṅga etc. convey the sense of cultivation and farming G.S. Roy, Uttara Bāngla Rājyañī Samāer Dev Devī O

Pujāpārvana, (Unpublished thesis (Bengali) in the University of North Bengal, p. 11)

- 29 B.K. Barua, op. cit., p. 165.
- 30 Sibapada Bhowmik, UttarVangar loka sakti carca, (Bengali) Jalpaiguri, 1980, p. 25.
- 31 M. Neog (ed.), 'Pavitra Assam', p. 29. Jorhat, 1969.
- 32 A.K. Chakravarty, 'Literature in Kāmarūpa-Koch Bihār Rāidarbār', Dhubri, 1964, p. 110.
- 33 Ibid., p. 134.
- 34 Ibid., p. 110.
- 35 Cf. A Sūrya image inscription from Rajganj by P.K. Bhattacharyya, in the Proceedings of Indian History Congress, 1977, pp. 790ff.
- 36 Quoted in B. Gohain's Human Sacrifice and Head Hunting in North Eastern India, Gauhati, 1977, p. 91.
N.N. Basu (Social History of Kāmarūpa, Vol. 3, p. 61) however, thinks that Kāmarūpa is the first seat of Sakti worship and this has been introduced by the Panis from an early time.
- 37 D.C. Sircar, The Śākta Pīthas, p. 15.

He holds that the original name was Kāma which, might have been a shortened form of 'Kāmarūpa'. Kakati, however, opines that the word is non-Sanskritic in origin. 'The name of Goddess is traced to the Austric words Kāmoi (demon), Kāmoit (devil), Kōmin (Grave), Kāmet (Corpse in Khasi), Kāmū (a god of the Santals), etc. B.K. Kakati, 'Assam Tribune' Oct., 22, 1947, quoted in the Śākta Pīthas.

B.Kakati again in Assamese, its formation and development, Gauhati, 1941, pp.53ff suggests that Kāmākhya was formerly, a goddess of Ghosts and spirits, who was worshipped in a Śmasāna or cremation ground⁶.

38 Cf. the genital organ of Saktī fell here when her body was carried, hither and thither in frantic sorrow by her husband Śiva. The mountain represented the body of Śiva himself and when Sati's genital organ fell on it, the mountain turned blue. The Goddess herself is called Kāmākhya, because she came there secretly to satisfy her aruous (Kāma) with Śiva.⁷ B.K.Barua, op.cit., p.187.

39 R.P.Chanda, Indo-Aryan Races, Delhi, Reprint, 1976, pp.122-61.

40 R.G.Bhandarkar, however, informs us of the extent and growth of the Śakta cult in other parts of India. He ascribed the Goddess Sakti in fierce form, in which she was associated with ^{the} sacrifice of animals and human beings.

See R.G.Bhandarkar Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and other Minor Religious Systems, Vārānasi, 1965, pp.142ff.

"In fact, the worship of the Great mother in some of her various shrines of Assam and East Bengal, particularly in Kāmākhya near Gauhati, is looked upon as being originally Kirāta of Tibeto-Burman".

The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol.I, Calcutta, p.90.

41 B.Gohain, op.cit., Preface.

Gait, op.cit. p.59, observed that one hundred and

42 E.A.Gait, A History of Assam, 3rd ed., p.59.

43 J.A.S.B., 1873, p.240.

H.Blochman writes, 'The prevalence of human sacrifices in Koch Bihar is known from the Ain'.

The Darrang Rājā Vaisāvalī narrates :

"Tin laksa hom dilā ek laksa bali |
Sāt kuri pāik dilā kari tārafali" ||

See N.C.Sharma (ed.), op.cit., p.111, Gauhati, 1973.

Gait (op.cit., p.59), observed on the basis of above verse that one hundred and forty men were sacrificed before the Goddess Kāmākṣhyā. But the real meaning of the verse is that 140 pāiks (Sebāits) were given to help in the worship of the Goddess and this fact was recorded on Tārafali (Copper plates). It may be noted that in Assam, the servants employed in temples, of Gods and Goddesses and whose caste befit, them, for drawing water for worship, are called 'pāiks'.

44 B.Gohain, Human Sacrifice and Head Hunting in North Eastern Assam, Gauhati, 1977, p.10.

45 B.Gohain, op.cit., pp.11ff.

Intro - pp.(x-xi)

'There is archaeological evidence to suggest that a ritual significance was attached to head hunting about 40,000 B.C. Human sacrifices is related to the Agricultural Revolution and developed after 10,000 B.C.'

46 M.Neog, Sankaradevs and His Times, Gauhati, 1955.

47 B.K.Barna, op.cit., p. 166.

The author has referred to the Devī Purāṇa, a work composed about the end of the seventh or the beginning of the 8th century A.D.

48 S.K.Chatterjee, op.cit., pp. 12-13.

Cf. Tespur plates, Kāmarūpa Śāsanāvalī, (Eng. ed.), p. 176.

The inscriptions of Vansūāla and Indrapāla (Cf. Guaknei Grant, op.cit., p. 204) refer to the Temples of Kāmesvara and Mahāgaurī.

49 ~~महाप्रभु~~ M. Neog has suggested that Saivism was so forceful in earlier periods that the Saktism could not attract many people as well as the rulers in its folds (M. Neog, op.cit., p. 31).

50 Ibid., p. 85.

51 N.N. Paul, (ed.) op.cit., p. 14.

52 N.C. Sharma (ed.), op.cit., p. 15.

53 Ibid., p. 20.

53a N.N. Vasu, op.cit. Vol. II, p. 58; S.C. Goswami, op.cit., p. 46.

Cf. Brāhmaṇa Śāstī Mahā Puruṣa śūrio |

Kaṇai purat pūrbe āchilo Śūrio ||

54 N.N. Vasu, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 47.

55 N.N. Vasu, op.cit., Vol. II, pp. 47, 165; N.C. Sharma (ed.), op.cit. 86

Cf. 'Sarvabhāma nānebhāla Rāj Purohit, V. 173.

But the name of ministers as mentioned in ^{the} Darrang Rāja Vānsūāli are Barihaṇā and Baihāgu. It does not mention about Narahari Dāsa to be the Prime Minister.

N.C. Sharma (ed.), op.cit., p. 34.

- 56 N.N.Paul (ed.), op.cit., p. 3.
 57 N.C.Sharma, op.cit., pp. 42-43.
 58 S.C.Ghosal, op.cit., (Eng. tr.), p. 160.

'The rent free land of 23,685 Bighas as Devottara property of the Goddess Kamakhya is still in existence. The Kamakhya temple had a great damage in 1897 due to an earthquake. It is said that an amount of Rs. 3,200 was sanctioned by the Durbar of Cooh Behar for its repair'.

59 Ibid., p. 135.

60 Though it appears from the Nilācala Temple (Cf. Prāya Śāsanāvalī, by M. Neog, 2nd ed., p. 2) Inscription that the Kāmākhya temple was constructed (Racitaven) by Naranārāyaṇa and Śuklādhwaja, some scholars believe that the temple was actually rebuilt by the royal brothers over the basement which dates much earlier, in 1565 A.D. See M. Neog, op.cit. p. 142. H.C. Goswami, Daxrang Rāja Vaiṣṇavī, Intro. p. 7; S.C. Ghosal, op.cit., p. 158.

61 Rām Charana, Thākura, Sāikara Carit, (p. 280), A. Ahmed, Kuch Bihār Tihāsa
A History of Koch Behar, (in Bengali), pp. 125-26.

'Suklādhwaja is credited with one hundred wives'

62 E.A. Gait, The Koch Kings of Kamrup, 1923, p. 28.

63 M. Neog, Cf. Rock Inscription of the Kāmatesvarī temple,
Prāya Śāsanāvalī, pp. 145, 5.

64 Amanatullah Ahmed refers to the tradition as mentioned
 in the Sāikara Carit, op.cit., pp. 127-28.

65 R.C. Majumdar (ed.), op.cit., Vol. VII, p. 367.

66 M. Neog, Sankaradeva, (The Background, p. 2).

New Delhi, 1969.

67 S. K. Chatterjee, op. cit., p. 70.

Also see Tarachand, Influence of Islam on Indian Culture, Allahabad, 1946, p. 147.

68 Eliot, Hinduism and Buddhism, Vol. II, London, 1921, p. 74.

69 H. V. S. Murthy, Sankaradeva and Bengal: a Comparative Study, p. 38.

70 M. Neog, Sankaradeva and His Times, p. 108.

71 H. V. S. Murthy, op. cit., p. 39.

S. K. Chatterjee on the basis of the Hevaira Tantra (8th Century A.D.), the Kālikāpurāna (earlier than 1000 A.D.) and Yoginī Tantra (more or less of the same period) asserts that Śākta Tantricism fully established itself in Assam by the time the above mentioned works were composed.
op. cit., p. 12.

72 N. N. Vasu, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 11-12 &

H. N. Dutta Barua (ed.), Guru Carita, pp. 48 ff. Ht 4266

73 M. Neog, Sankaradeva, p. 20, New Delhi, 1967.

74 H. N. Dutta Barua (ed.), Guru Carita, pp. 745 ff.

75 P. Jash, History and Evolution of Vaishnavism in Eastern India,

Calcutta, 1982, p. 63.

And this matter has also been discussed by H. V. S.

Murthy, op. cit., p. 23.

76 Kāmarūpa Śāstrī, Eng. ed. Gauhati, 1981, 1 ff.

77 H. V. S. Murthy, op. cit., p. 23.

78 Rāmacarṇa Thākura, Śāṅkara Carit, p. 185.

H.N. Datta Barua (ed.), Mahāpurāṣa śrī

Śāṅkaradeva āra śrī Mādhyava Deva Carita, pp. 157-68.

79 Ibid., pp. 168ff.

79(i) "King Naranārāyaṇa was so much impressed by his personality and learning that he once directed that due honour be shown to him From that date the king held him in high esteem and treated him with consideration. Śāṅkaradeva established a Satra (Central monastery) at Koch Behar, made many converts including the Cola Dewan (Śukladhaja) and stayed there for six months on that occasion. Later, as desired by the king he paid a visit to Koch Behar once every year".

Intro. to Aṅg Kāvālī, by Kaliram Medhi, quoted in an article 'The destruction of the Kāmākhya Temple as referred to in the Yoginī Tantra, by Śrī Biswanarayana Shastri, The Journal of the Assam Research Society, 1972-80, Gauhati, p. 3.

79(ii) Cf. Hari bhaktik tumi kariyo dracār |

Hari bhaji nare hanak saṁsāra pār || V.608.

N.C. Sharma (ed.), op.cit., p. 124.

79a S.N. Sharma, 'A Contemporary of Guru Nanak - Shankaradeva'

Journal of Sikh Studies, Vol. V, No. 1 Feb. 1978, Amritsar, p. 129.

79b N.N. Vasu, The Social History of Kamarupa, Vol. II, p. 111.

79c H.N. Datta Barua (ed.), Guru carita, p. 310.

80 Śāṅkaradeva, Kīrtana Ghosa, Verse Nos. 5, p. 341.

81 H.V.S.Murthy, op.cit., p. 149.

82 And also in S.N.Sharma's 'The Neo-Vaishnavite Movement and the Sātra Institution of Assam, Gauhati, 1966, p. 223.

83 S.N.Sharma, op.cit., p. 244.

84 Loc.cit.

85 Ibid., pp. 244-45.

86 A.K.Chakravarty, op.cit., p. 37.

S.N.Sharma's article - A Contemporary of Guru Nanak - Shankaradeva Journal of Sikh Studies, Vol.V, Amritsar, 1972, pp. 135-36.

87 A.K.Chakravarty, op.cit., p. 37.

88 S.N.Sharma, The Neo-Vaishnavite Movement and the Sātra Institution of Assam, p. 370.

88a N.N. Vasu, op.cit vr. II, pp. 111-112

89 Rāma Chandra Thākura's Śāṅkara Gaṇī, (pp. 274, 301) x

refers to a Ghāt of Kāgajkūtā on the bank of Torsa river where it is said that during the period of performing funeral rites of Śāṅkaradeva the Goddess offered a shower of rains of flowers and thus the river was named Puspakāntī^s. That particular place has now become either a dead river or a hill.

It is also said that Śāṅkaradeva took his last breath in Kāgajkūtā :

'Pāche Śāṅkare mahala pār hai Kākat

kūtār chāte gailā |

Kākat kūtār chāte Śāṅkar

paralok hailā'. ||

- Kaliratna Bhattacharyya,
Sat Śāṅkaradevar Katha, pp. 45 & 46.

90 Bhūṣaṇadvīja, Srī Srī Śaṅkaradeva, p. 222.

91 S.C. Goswami (ed.), op.cit., p. 115.

'Bhelāt caṣṭarṇāti

raillā mahāraṣiḥ'.

92 H.M. Das, (ed.) Māghosa, pp. 14-15, Gauhati, 1957, pp 14-15

93 Ibid., p. 15.

94 Ibid., Cf. (Intro: p. 10)

95 Ibid., Verse 473, 501.

96 H.N. Dutta Barua (ed.), Mahāpurāṇa Srī Śaṅkaradeva

Śrī Mādhavaḍevar Gaṛita, pp. 339-40.

Cf. 'Kahiba katek saraṇ lailek

Āno nagarastha jan.

Dak Dākua Bar Barua

Bilāntarā lekjana.

Nāhi ādi anta āsi aparjanta

Kṛṇat laila saraṇ! v. 1503

Koch Mech lok saba erilek

Pūrvar jata sār!

Mādhavaḍevar Upadeśā pāvā

Bhalla saba sadāśār" v 1504

97 'A Sātra is a religious College which is in some respects not unlike a medieval monastery'.

See Allen's Assam Dist. Gazetteers Vol. VII, Sibsagar, p. 97.

98 H.N. Das (ed.), Intro, op.cit., p. 11.

99 J.N. Samaddar, European Portals, 4th Part, p. 61.

Sana Samayk Bhārat (in Bengali).

99a S.C.Ghosal, op.cit., p.81.

Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa declared the new faith propounded by Mādhava deva as the State religion. M.Neog, Sankaradeva, New Delhi, 1967, p. 30.

100 It is curious to note that the prince Viṣṇunārāyaṇa and the queen along with princess and members of royal family took initiation to Madhavadeva while he was in Koch Bihar,

See H.M.Das, op.cit. Intro: p.12.

101 H.N.Datta Barua (ed.), op.cit., p.339;

H.M.Das (ed.) Intro : op.cit., p.12.

And it has also been stated in Śrī Śrī Deva Dāmodaradeva Garita, S.C.Goswami (ed.), p.123) that Mādhavadeva came to Koch Bihar from Porābhita Thān. He opened a sutra at Madhupura where he took his last breath.

102 Nīlkantha Dāsa, Ed. S.C.Goswami, op.cit., p.133.

Cf. Parvā āśode Rāja Nānā āśode kari,

'Baikāthapurā tēn dilanta sādari || - p.133.

'Baikāthapurā Dāmodara āśā nabi | p.161.

Also see Amanatulla Ahmed's op.cit., pp.64ff.

103 K.C.Pathak (ed.), Gurūlīlā, p.109.

104 Ibid., p.111.

104a Ghosal, op.cit., p.82.

105 Cf. 'Tala bati āi thik laci Nṛpatar

Āru bisā tankā O' deya Rāj bhāndārar ||

Kumbhakar nāpit rajak sonārik |

Bhūmi melidilā Rājā sebite dharmak⁹¹

V.705

K.C.Pathak (ed.), op.cit., p.113.

106 S.C.Goswami, op.cit., p.134.

(Quote Verse)

Cf. Lakṣmī nārāyaṇ putra jata jata |

Laliek śaraṇ Dāmodar caranata || V 515

107 K.C.Pathak (ed.), op.cit., p.114.

Cf. 'Nagara lok jata aḥe nagarā |

Śaraṇ lalenta Dāmodar caranat || V 707

Brāhmaṇ kāyastha Rāj prajāṅ āndolan |

Prabhu Dāmodarar saḥeo sukul anukū ||

Pratikūl acarantā nahi sirājyat |

Prabhu Dāmodarar prati saḥe anugat ¶ (708)

108 A.K.Chakravartty, op.cit., p.51.

109 H.N.Datta Barua (ed.) op.cit., pp.173 ff.

110 H.N.Datta Barua (ed.), Guru Garita, p.836.

M.Neog (ed.) Bardovā Guru Garita, p.167.

But according to Śaṅkara Garit, Śaṅkaraḍeva is said to have told Naraṇārāyaṇa that he would never initiate a king, woman and orthodox Brāhmaṇa.

Cf. Rāja strī karmakāṇḍi Bhaṣṇaṇa Śaḥara |

Kadāḥito māi Guri nahi isabara. ||

- Rāmācarana Thākura, Śaṅkara Garit, p.295.

- 111 N.N.Vasu, op.cit., Vol.II, p. 111.
 112 S.C.Ghosal, op.cit., p. 162.
 113 Biswanath Das (ed.), Rājopākhyān (in Bengali), p.41, Calcutta, 1985.

However, in The Cooch Behar State and its 1861 Revenue Settlements by H.N.Chowdhury, it has been said in one place (p.242) that this image was established by king Rūpanarāyaṇa, but in another (p.698) by King Prānanarāyaṇa (1632-1665 A.D.).

- 114 R.C.Majumdar (Ed.), The History of Bengal, (Medieval period), p.478.
 114a P.K.Bhattacharyya and Shyamal Ch.Guha Roy, Sankaradeva's Meeting with Caitanyadeva - a study in Contemporary sources, (paper presented at the seminar on Early Historical Perspectives of North Bengal held at Balurghat College under the auspices of the Akshaya Kumar Maitreya Museum, North Bengal University,
 115 Kail Ram Neohi, Studies in the Vaishnava Literature and Culture of Assam, Assam Sahitya Sabha, Jorhat, 1978, pp.20-21. Sankaradeva's date of birth in 1449 A.D. has earlier been accepted by K.L.Barua, Early History of Kamarupa, p.308 and L.B.esbarua, Sankaradeva, p.184.
 116 Maheshwar Neog, Sankaradeva, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1980 (Reprinted), pp.6, 22.
 117 Cf. 'Did Caitanya influence Sankaradeva' ? by H.V.S.Murthy in Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol.35, pp.171 ff.

- The Early History of the
- 118 S.K. Dey, Vaiṣṇava Faith and Movement in Bengal, Calcutta, 1961
pp. 32, 101.
- 119 The name is said to have been given by Śaṅkaradeva himself. Dāmodaradeva was Brāhmaṇa by birth and founder of the Bāṇunīyā branch of Vaiṣṇavism. Khan Chowdhuri Amanatulla Ahmed, ^{Kuch Bihon Itihāsa} A History of East Bihar (Bengali), 1936, p. 64.
- 120 Supra ref. no. 102.
- 121 It has been suggested that Dāmodaradeva died in 1598 A.D. (Khan Chowdhuri Amanatulla Ahmed, op. cit., pp. 65-6). But Dāmodaradeva was driven out by Parikṣit who became king of Kāmarūpa in 1603 A.D. when he issued coins. Parikṣit was alive when Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa met the Emperor Jahāngīr in 1618 A.D. and the Emperor is said to have made an attempt to establish peace and amity between Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa and Parikṣit.
- Cf. Rāiā bole nityaḥ hobe āmunār |
Birodh bhābat na karābo namaskār ||
- Śaundaranārāyaṇa Vaiṣṇavī, Patra 100.
Also see Bahārīstān-i-Ghaybī, Vol. II, p. 234;
Tazuk-i-Jahāngīrī, pp. 160, 162, 166. Cf. Kāmarūpa
Bhāṣā, p. 10.
- 122 Cf. Journal of the Numismatic Society of India,
Vol. XXXIII, pt. I, p. 131.
- 123 See 'Introduction' of S. Goswami (ed.) Śrī Śrī Deva-Dāmodara
Gitā.

- 124 Cf. (Sankaradeva) 'is said to have been born in 1449 and to have died in 1559. The later date is probably correct, in which case the former is possibly thirty or forty years too early'. Edward Gait, A History of Assam, Third edition, 1963, p. 59.
- 125 Maheshwar Neog, op.cit., p. 9.
- 126 S. Goswami (ed.), op.cit., pp. 27-28.
- 127 Dilip Kumar Mukhopadhyaya, Gaitanya, National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1974, p. 19.
- 128 Ibid., p. 36; R.C. Majumdar (ed.), The Delhi Sultanate, p. 567.
- 129 S. Goswami (ed.), op.cit., pp. 72 ff.
R.M. Nath (Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. IV, p. 222) thinks that Sankaradeva met Caitanyadeva who was in a state of divine ecstasy. Both gazed at each other, but there was no discourse between them. B.B. Majumdar (Gaitanya Chaitany Upadhan (Bengali), p. 409) also holds that the two met each other, but did not talk.
- 130 Dinesh Chandra Sen, Brahat-Vanga (Bengali) Vol. II, p. 1067 and also see the illustration.
- 131 L. Basbarua, op.cit., pp. 230-31. Also Maheshwar Neog, op.cit., p. 21.
- 132 R.C. Majumdar (ed.), History of Bengal (Medieval period) (Bengali), 1973 Sen, p. 277.
- 133 Cf. Sankara Chrit, p. 185. See also Sri Sudhansu Mohan Banerjee, Assiya Sahitya, p. 35.

- 134 Cf. Kalidasa-Nat of Saṅkaradeva; See A.K.Chakravartti,
Literature in Kāśī Kōsh Bihār Rāj. Darbhā,
Dhubri, 1964, p.36.
- 135 Cf. Kalidasa-Nat of Saṅkaradeva; loc.cit.
- 136 Dilip Kumar Mukhopadhyaya, op.cit., p.86.
- 137 Ibid., p.57.
- 138 Ibid., p.122.
- 139 Ibid., p.123.
- 140 Cf. Kirtana of Saṅkaradeva; Ibid., p.33.
- 141 loc.cit.
- 142 Dilip Kumar Mukhopadhyaya, op.cit., pp.49ff.
- 143 A.K.Chakravartti, op.cit., p.56.
- 144 H.M.Ghosh(ed.) Nān Ghosā, by Sri Mādhavadeva,
Intro : S.C.Roy, pp.25-26.
- 145 K.R.S.Iyenger (ed.), Guru Nanak - A Homage!, pp.91-92.
Guru Nanak, Sikhism and Assam, an article by M.Neog.
- 145a T.Singh, A Biography : Guru Nanak : Founder of
of Sikhism, Delhi, 1959, p 213
- 146 Dr.Arjan Singh Mann, Guru Teg Bahadur and Assam Pradesh,
Delhi, p.170.
- 147 Macauliffe, The Sikh Religion, Vol.IX, pp.353ff.
- 148 S.C.Roy, op.cit., Ed. H.M.Das, pp.26-27.
- 149 Trilochan Singh, op.cit., p.212.
- 150 Ibid loc.cit.
- 151 S.S.Kohli, Travels of Gurnanak, Punjab University, p.46.

152 H.N. Datta Barua (ed.), op. cit., pp. 253-54.

"Dekhā Ghosā puthikhan suay āchay Sate kahi āchē
libā kahibe lagay. || Tāhar arthake libāian bulibek ||
sehiane iana hāg suk pāibek || 1555 Ghosāte smaste
mor bal buddhi iata | iār bhāgya āche ste raibe smaste"

153 U.C. Lekharu (ed.), Kathāguru Carita, Nalbari, 1932, p. 514.

154 'The Assamese Vaisnava Temple, called Kirttana-Gṛha or nanghar, is an ordinary house providing a rectangular space like the inside of a Sikh Gurudvara; and in it the object of Veneration is no idol, but a large pedestal to contain one or more of the two original Guru's works. This is called Guru-asana which has its striking parallel in the adoration of the Guru Granth Sahib by the Sikhs' -

M. Neog, op. cit., p. 98.

154a H.M. Das, (ed.), op. cit., p. xviii.

154b Sher Singh, Philosophy of Sikhism, Jullunder, 1944, 2nd ed. 1966, p. 140. Cf. (The way in which the Granth is wrapped in clothes and when opened, but not read is covered by a sheet of cloth was also fashion for its sister quran).

Incidentally it has been mentioned that 'Nanak met Baba Farid II who was the 13th spiritual successor of the First Sheikh Farid Shakerjang'. Both of them prescribed some steps in the spiritual progress of the mass. Both the Creeds agreed to uphold the sense of general tolerance and mutual respect for all religions'.

Ibid., p. 144.

- 155 T. Singh, op. cit., p. 212.
- 156 Khuswant Singh, A History of the Sikhs, Delhi, 1977, p. 41.
- 157 M. Neog, op. cit., p. 97.
- 157a S. C. Roy in Naga Ghoshā ed. by H. M. Das, p. 25.
- 158 Ibid., p. 27.
- 158a Ibid., p. XXVI.
- 159 M. Neog, op. cit., pp. 98-99.
- 159^a Ibid., p. 98
- 160 S. K. Chatterjee, The Place of Assam in the History and Civilisation of India, Gauhati University, 1970, p. 70.
- 161 M. Saikia, Assam-Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, Golaghat, Assam, p. 222.
- 162 Loc. cit.
- 163 Loc. cit.
- 164 Ibid., p. 223.
- 165 Loc. cit.
- 166 Loc. cit.
- 167 Blochman, J. A. S. B., 1872, p. 80.
- 167a A. Banerjee & S. Das (ed.), Koch Bihar Zelar Purāṭi (Bengali) Archaeological Dept., Govt. of West Bengal, 1974, p. 25(Intro)
- 168 Ghosal, op. cit., p. 85
- The tomb of Shāh Fakir is situated in the ancient capital of Amatā-Koch Bihar named Dhaluābāri, four miles to the south east, of the town of Koch Bihar. The Koch Bihar Durbar has granted 77 land as 'Pirpal' to meet the expenses of this Durgā. The Muhammeden religion flourished

in this area by the preachings of different pīrs viz.
Torṣāpīr Shāh Gwīb Kamāl, Ismāīl Gāsi, Pāglāpīr,
Satyapīr etc.

169 H.N.Chowdhury, The Cooh Behar State and its Land
Revenue Settlement, 1903, p. 141.

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CHAPTER IV

SECTION I

SOCIAL CONDITION

The division of the people into four Varṇas or Social Groups viz. Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Sūdra was merely a theory, except perhaps in the ancient period of Indian history. In later times, the connotation of the term Varṇa expanded so as to signify the four conventional grades of the Indian Society in which Aryan and Non-aryan elements were gradually being mixed up.¹ The limits comprising the social grades called Varṇa came to be known as jāti; but in later literature, this word is often used in the sense of varṇa itself. The primary significance of the term jāti is birth; but the early catuṣ varṇa division of the Indo-Aryan Society was not really dependent on birth. The incorporation of the tribal groups in the Brahmanical social system seems to have popularised the word jāti in the sense of a caste and later also of a varṇa. By the time Bengal adopted the Aryan culture, numerous castes and sub-castes had been evolved, mainly by the development of different arts, crafts and professions, but partly also for other reasons, and tribal, racial and religious factors were at work in gradually adding to their number.²

The author of the Dharma-sūtras and smṛtis attempted

to bring the actual state of society of their days within the framework of the four Varṇas. This led them to propound the theory that the numerous castes (and even tribes and races), actually existing in the country, arose from the unions of males and females belonging to varṇas other than their own.³ This theory originally applied to the males and females of the four primitive Varṇas, had to be extended to those of the subsidiary or mixed castes, arising out of their union. Even then the Smṛtikāras could not follow this process logically ad infinitum. The characteristic features of society in medieval Bengal have been faithfully reflected in the Bṛhad-dharma and the Bṛhad-Vaiyartā purāṇas which were composed not later than the 13th-14th century A.D. The texts point out the breakdown of the traditional four-fold caste system and the emergence of a large number of non-Brahmana mixed castes (the conventional number being 35) which are classified as uttama, madhyama and adhama sūtikāras, all having the status of sūdra on the basis of different vocations.⁴

The process of State formation within a tribe could have started only when it had to a considerable extent moved from shifting to permanent cultivation, as a quantum of surplus was necessary to maintain the rudimentary state apparatus. Accordingly in the early 16th century we notice two medieval tribal state formations one under the Ahoms who initially settled in the upper Brahmaputra valley from the neighbouring Shan State (Burma) and other the Kāmata-Koch Kingdom stretching

from the Karatoya to the Bagmati. The adoption of Sanskrit culture by the first important ruler of the Kamata-Koch Kingdom Visvasinha gave a great deal of impetus towards the formation of castes in the tribal group to which he belonged. We have already noticed that the traditional four-fold caste system had been submerged and numerous castes and sub-castes were developed in the medieval Bengal and it is not unlikely that this trend might have influenced social formation in the Kamata-Koch territory. As a result of the influx of a large numbers of the Brahmana population from the adjoining territories into the kingdom of Kamata since the earlier times, attempts were made to organise the society on the basis of the traditional catu-varna system in the reign of Naranarayana.⁵ The Kamandi of Siddhantavagisa was composed at the court of Naranarayana aimed at this traditional divisions of the society. But it appears that the four-fold division of the society remain more or less superficial, the real basis of the divisions of the society, as we notice in the other parts of Bengal, was determined on the development of the arts, crafts and professions, and the castes were accordingly classified as uttara, madhyama and hina jatis.⁶

Visvasinha, as noticed earlier, brought Brahmana from Kanauj. They replaced the kalitas and became the Gurus of the Koch people.⁷ He inducted some men of piety (Vaidika) from Srihatta, and gave them the title of Kamarupa Brahmanas.^{7a}

authority was established in the whole of the Kānata-Koch Kingdom. Again, with the ascendancy of the Brāhmanas the ancient custom of worshipping the respective tribal deities by the people was abolished. In Śiddhānta Vajīna's Smṛiti Karmudī Brāhmanas alone have been allowed the right of worshipping Śaktī. By an injunction the Koch kings, the Śūdras, women in general, especially young ladies, and even the Brāhmanas widows were prohibited from looking at the goddess Kāmāchya.¹² In the Dvaravata Rājā Vamsāvalī, it has been mentioned that in all temples lying to the north of Gohāin Kanāl's All (Boad) which was the line of demarcation between southern and northern Kāmrūpa, the Koches and the Meches would continue to perform the worship, while in the south the Brāhmanas would officiate.¹³ This law was to hold good in all places.

It may thus be inferred that the supremacy of the Brāhmanas was established in the Kānata-Koch Kingdom including the districts of Gouālpurā, Kāmrūpa, Nowgōn and Darrang. Kāmrūpa was then known far and wide as the greatest centre of the Śāktas. The Bahat Rājwansāvalī, a work compiled under Raja Harendranarayana of Koch Bihar¹⁴ supplies us with some information about the simplification of the duties of the Brāhmanas who in spite of their knowledge of the śāstras, had resorted to taking fish and meat and also cultivation. They did not feel the necessity of upholding the ideals of Brahmacharya (11fe-long celibacy) and of fasting on the Brahmāṅgī day (other than on the day of Śukṛāntarī).

Kāyastha

With the rise of the Bhuyāns at the patronage of the king Naranārāyana and Gilā Rāj, the social status of the Kāyastha Bhuyāns increased gradually. These Bhuyāns were defeated at the hands of Visvasiṅha who founded the Koch kingdoms on the ruins of the Kāmatā kingdom.¹⁵ The Bhuyāns fled to the upper Assam but again their fate did not favour them. These Bhuyāns somehow incurred displeasure of the king Sukhāpā (1552-1603 A.D.) who ultimately ousted them from the Ahom kingdom.¹⁶ The fourteen Bhuyāns then appeared before King Naranārāyana at his court. They appealed to the king for their shelter. Hence, through the efforts of Gilā Rāj, king Naranārāyana had established fourteen Bhuyāns in his kingdom making land grants to them.¹⁷ It is recorded in Rājā Harendranārāyana's Bṛhat Rāja Vaiśewālī, that the king Naranārāyana had married Bhānumatī, the daughter of the Bhuyān Pratāpa Ray and that his brother Gilā Rāj had married Candrapāṭhā, the daughter of Pratap's youngest brother. The learned lady Bhānumatī became the principal queen of Naranārāyana.¹⁸

From the Gurita Pāṭh we learn that the ruler of Kāmatā (probably Visvasiṅha) brought Brāhmanas and Kāyasthas from the king of Gauda.¹⁹ It is noticed earlier that Naranārāyana encouraged the settlement of the Kāyastha Bhuyāns on the bank of the river Brāhmaputra. The Kāyasthas were established in the society. They were Sanskrit Scholars of

repute. Their ladies were also highly educated.²⁰ The Kathā-guru-carita refers to the Kāyasthas who were employed in ploughing or carrying of loads on their shoulders in the eastern part of the country.²¹

Vaidyas

The Vaidyas are mentioned in the Darrang Rāja Vaisāvali as the Physicians.^{22*} It is, however, difficult to say when this professional group was developed into a caste. The South Indian Inscriptions (8th century A.D.) contain the earliest reference to the Vaidyas.²³ There is no definite reference to the Vaidyas as a caste in Bengal before the 12th century A.D. when they gave the status of Uttama Śākhara (Śūdra).²⁴

The Vaidyas represent a small professional caste of Physicians whose crystallisation as a social group seems to have begun in the age of the later Pālas i. e. about the 11th century A.D.^{24a} This caste is identified with the ancient Ambastha-jāti in the Candraprabhā (composed in 1675 A.D.) by Bharata Mallika, the famous Vaidya Scholar of Bengal. That the Vaidyas were regarded as Ambasthas as early as 16th century A.D. is indicated by the Suriana Carita which describes its Vaidya another Candra Śekhara as a Gauda Ambastha.^{24b} Outside Bengal in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, the barbaras who are surgeons are called both Vaidya and Ambastha (Ambattan). According to Sircar some Ambastha-Vaidyas of South India migrated to

Bengal in the early medieval period and merged themselves in the local physician classes so as to develop ultimately into the Bengal Vaidya Community (Sircar, op.cit., p. 118). They were held in high esteem in the society. ✓

Kaivarttas

Daityari Thakura refers to the Kaivarttas with whom Śaṅkaradeva dined.²⁵ The Kaivarttas stands for Mārgava or Dāsa in the Āryāvartta, who is born of a Niṣāda father and an Ayogava mother.^{25a} The Jātakas refer to the fishermen as Kevattas.²⁶ The Brahma-Vaivartta Purāna mention, the Kaivarttas as born of Kṣatriya and Vaiśya mother, but the Kaivarttas were degraded in the Kālī-yuga by his association with Ṭivara and adoption of the vocation of fisherman (Dhivara).²⁷ Bhaṭṭ Bhaṇḍarāyaṇa, however, refers to them as one of the antajas (low castes). According to a tradition Vallabhasena improved the status of the Kaivarttas and made them a clean caste.²⁸ They are said to have owned land and lived on agriculture.²⁹ This attests the present divisions of the Kaivartta caste viz., Hālovā (one who works with the hāla or the plough) and Jālovā (one who works with the Jāla or the throw-net).^{29a} ✓

Kaivajñas

The Kaivajñas or the astrologers were specially associated with the propitiating of the Grahas or planets and considered to be the important members of the society.³⁰ It may be mentioned here that during the early medieval period the Devala Brāhmaṇas were degraded for cultivating the study

of 'astrology'. In the 19th century A.D. the Ganaka Brāhmanas of Bengal whose profession seems to have also been connected with astrology and were considered as degraded Brāhmana.^{30a} The functions of the Daivajñas are given in the Darrang Rāja-Vaiśāvalī and the Gosānīmāngala.³¹ Śhīvara Daivajña who flourished in the court of Visvasinha used to give counselling to the king so that no untoward thing could occur. It may be noted that Sūrya Khari Daivajña alias Baladeva who composed Darrang RājaVaiśāvalī under order of Rājā Saundranārēyaṇa at about 1791 A.D. was himself a member of Daivajña caste. These Daivajña people received royal patronage.^{31a}

From the Darrang RājaVaiśāvalī and the Bohērodānta,³² we gather the names of a large number of other castes who were associated with different types of vocations. They are as follows :

Sonāri (Goldsmith), Kumar (Potter), Tāntī (Weaver), Māli (Gardeners), Gāvān (Singer), Bāvān (Drummer), Toli (oil-pressurers), Kānār (Blacksmith), Kāhār (Palanquin bearers), Sūtradhār (Carpenters), Rajak (Washermen), Modak (confectionaries), Chānār (shoe-maker), Jalā (fisherman), Goālā (producer of milk-products) etc.

The above account gives us a fair idea of the pattern of social life in the Kānatā-koch kingdom. It appears that 'caste system was less vigorous, less elaborate and less inhibiting in this region than elsewhere'.³³ Even the

Brāhmana women were allowed to plough the lands or to engage in weaving. It has rightly been suggested that "the steady process of detribalization over the centuries also meant, inter alia, the proselytes' adoption of mud-plinth dwelling houses in place of pile-houses, of the caste society's dominant language in place of a tribal dialect and of the plough in place of the hoe or the digging stick".³⁴

It is interesting to note that in the wake of class distinctions, Śaṅkaradeva and ~~and~~ Dāmodaradeva acted as social reformers in order to bring all sections of people on one platform. All the people of the kingdom on account of the popularity of the Śākta Cult, male and female, young and old alike used to eat the flesh of animals in addition to fish. The people of this country were greatly influenced by this custom which had obviously a chastening effect on the society.³⁵ It may be mentioned that at the instance of Śaṅkaradeva, the people irrespective of castes or creed used to dine together.³⁶

Before king Naranārāyaṇa, Śaṅkaradeva upheld that according to Śāstra the Brāhmanas would attain salvation by reading the Bhāgavata, the Kshatriya would get the kingdom, the Vaiśyas, the wealth and the Sūdras would become pure.³⁷ Śaṅkaradeva again postulated that a Vaiṣṇava should equally treat a Brāhmana or Candāla without judging the caste to which he belonged.³⁸

Women :

In Kāmarūpa the woman was the recipient of special honour as the representative of the Goddess Kāmākhya.³⁹ The Koches like the Ahoms and the Shāns held their women folk in high esteem. Even in the present Koch Society the supremacy of mother is recognised on all hands. The whole community looks upon the female sex as the very back-bone of the social fabric. This resulted in a deep devotion to the women, symbolised by the generative organ which distinguishes her.⁴⁰

The queens of the Kāmata-Koch Bihar kingdom (viz. Bhānumatī, Br̄ndesvarī, Kāmesvarīdevī, Nirūpamādevī) took immense interest in the development of language and literature and uplift of the social status of the women in general. At the request of Bhānumatī Vidyāvāgīśā composed the Grammar Ratnamālā.⁴¹ It may be inferred that in those days the ladies of the royal harem were well-versed in Sanskrit. They showed great interest in the publication of religious books. Just as Malladeva came to be known as Naranarāyana at the time of his coronation, so Bhānumatī too got the name of Ratnamālā when she became the chief queen. In Behārdanta the queen Br̄ndesvarī Devī has drawn a picture of the social relationship among the women of various classes in the society. We learn regarding the dress, ornaments which the women generally used to wear while they had been coming out to see the king or to attend any social gathering.⁴² The queen herself came from a

common family. She was the daughter of Rājendranārāyaṇa, who was a zamindar of a place within the Goālpārā area. However, she became the queen by virtue of her qualities and erudition. She took immense interest in the study of various things such as Literature, nunthis, religion, Purāṇa etc. Language and literature flourished to a great extent in Koch Bihar during her period. The modern Jenkins School in Koch Bihar still stands today as a glaring example of the twin efforts of Kṛṣṇasvarī Devi and Bṛndasvarī Devi of Koch Bihar.⁴³ The women even among the lower class were conscious about their chastity. One fisherwoman is found to take the name after Sītā.⁴⁴ The women of upper class got their beloved after their choices and even the married women of chastity and devotion surrendered them to the worship of Lord Kṛṣṇa.⁴⁵

The women in general of Koch Bihar used to perform different Vrata Ceremonies for the welfare of the members of their families.⁴⁶ A good number of Vratas were in vogue viz. Kātyāyṇī Vrata, Sātpujā Vrata, Niskalanika Vrata, Subacānī Vrata, Manvantara Vrata etc. and these were observed for their well-being. Actually, these Vrata ceremonies were used to be performed since early days. Interestingly enough, the Vratas were performed without the Sāstric rituals.⁴⁷ In spirit and content the Vratas were magico-religious rites performed mainly by women folk for invoking the blessing of various deities to secure domestic happiness and welfare of dear ones. But with the advent of the

Brahmanas during the period of Narayana and Cilāraī Sāstric rules and regulations were incorporated into the Vrata ceremonies. It is interesting to note in this connection that king Narayana himself observed Nirāhari Vrata, apparently under the sāstric injunction, to propitiate the Goddess Durga.^{47a}

The character of the progressive minded heroine, as depicted in the Vratas like Ukhāi Gorāi and Ghot Pātālī Bhāsā was a source of inspiration among the women in general.⁴⁸

From the Sāstric Vrata,⁴⁹ it appears that the people of base origin were also admitted in the society. The women even of the lower classes had been enjoying the right to perform such ceremonial festivals. Campbell observes that generally the women were more intelligent and helpful than the male members in the family. In order to take care for the guests or to entertain anything, the women had to shoulder all responsibilities. They are said to have enjoyed full freedom. Even if they used to go without veil the society did not treat them improperly. They had to manage everything in the domestic affairs.⁵⁰

Marriage

The most important sacrament in a Hindu's life is the marriage ceremony. The Smritis generally record the

prevalence of the eight forms of marriage in the society, although they do not recommend all types of marriage. Among these Brāhma, Dāiva, Prājanatya and Ārsha types of marriage are praised by all^{50a} although the Manusmṛiti observes that only two forms Asura and Paissāca are not to be practised.^{50b} With the spread of Sanskrit Culture in the Kānata-Kośh kingdom and the advent of the Brāhmanas, the eight forms of marriage seem to have been prevalent in the society.^{50c} It appears, however, that the following three types of marriages were popular among the people of the kingdom.

(1) Gandharva marriage :

The Gāndharva form wherein the mutual love and consent of the bride and bridegroom is the only condition required to bring about the union (icchayānyonyasaṁ-yogaḥ). Neither the father nor the kinsmen need have a hand in bringing about the marriage. In the Kānata-Kośh kingdom this marriage celebrated with some trivial formalities. 'The girl is placed by young married women before a Ghalun hati (a sieve of bamboo containing among other thing five lights, a bunch of plaintain fruits, some grains of paddy, and a few ends of the durha grass), and is presented with a new cloth and sankha or shell bracelets. Garlands of flowers are also exchanged between the bride and the bridegroom'.⁵¹ No religious ceremony was performed, and the services of the priest were not required. This form of marriage was usually

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in vogue in the royal family and among the higher order of the people, and was very seldom, if ever, resorted to by the lower classes.

Brāhma marriage

According to usual custom the Brāhma form, consisting of the gift (dānam) of a daughter by the father, after decking her with ornaments to a man, learned in the Vedas and of a good character (Śrītiāilavān) whom the bride's father himself invites. This is the form of marriage that prevails among the people in general.⁵² The fundamental portion of the ceremony is the same as is commonly observed in Bengal and consists in the giving away of the bride by the father or any other relative, and acceptance of her by the bride-groom. The prevalence of dowries from bride's father was in practice. At the same time some people were also kept in father-in-law's house for their not being able to pay for a girl, and were thus called Ghar-jāva or Ghar-Jāmātā. H.N. Chowdhury records the superstitious habits of the Koch people. It is said that in spite of marriage the sight of any inauspicious omen on their way viz., a deadbody, a funeral, a ditch recently cut, a leech, a snake, led them come back home and the marriage was no more thought of. On the other hand, seeing on the way, flowers^{or} fish, it increased the happiness of the couple. The cutting of betel nuts, which was called daraganā presents

consisting of curd, ^{cheena} ~~sesame~~, fish, new cloth, shell bracelets, vermilion, betel-nuts and betel leaves were sent to the bride's home. The services of the Brahmana priest were necessary at the marriage'.^{52a}

Widow marriage

The Agni-purāna⁵³ repeats the remarkable texts of Nārada and Parāśara permitting a woman to take a second husband on the five occasions, viz., when the husband is lost, or is dead, or has adopted the life of a recluse or is impotent, or has become an outcaste. Likewise, Viśvarūpa⁵⁴ seems to sanction remarriage of women, for he quotes an authority permitting a father to give away his daughter, though no longer a virgin. On the other hand, it is forbidden by Brahma-purāna⁵⁵ and Medātithi.⁵⁶

In accordance with the earlier traditions the people of the kingdom would accept widows. As per local terms the male member was called Ṣaṅgana and the female was termed Ṣaṅgani. The cooked food by those widows were not taken by any other people. The union between a widow and a man among the native Hindus in this state was no marriage at all, and no ceremony was performed on the occasion.⁵⁷ This form of connection was looked down upon even by the people themselves. Young widows sometimes appeared to have given to the suitors by their relatives on the receipt of a sum of money and ornaments were also sometimes presented to the woman to

induce her to become pābhūnā (coming after). A social stigma generally attaches to the Pābhūnā connection even according to the public opinion of the caste itself. ✓

Though Dalton⁵⁸ refers to the tradition of monogamy among the people, it appears that the system of polygamy was not unknown, particularly among the rulers of the country. While the earlier authorities like the Smṛti-sādhikā refers to the practice of polygamy among the people, Vaijayanti supplies us with a two-fold classifications of the king's wives (like Mahisī, Devī, Paṭivrkti, Bābatā etc.) The Darrang-Rāja Vaiśāli⁵⁹ mentions as many as eighteen queens of Viśvasiṃha, the first important ruler of the Kānatā-Koch kingdom and these wives, however, did not enjoy the equal status like those of the kings of early medieval period. Similarly, when Naranārāyaṇa came to suppress the revolt of Raghudeva, his nephew, it is said that Raghudeva instead of fighting fairly, dressed his one hundred and twenty wives as soldiers and sent them to oppose his uncle.⁶⁰

The position of the widows in the society was not enviable. They were often looked upon as inauspicious and were not generally allowed to take part in different rites and ceremonies. They seem to have been encouraged by the people to immolate themselves in the funeral pyres of their husbands. The practice of asti, seems to have been in vogue in India from an early times. Damodaragupta's Kuttanīmatan,

refers that a ^{concubine} concubine of Bhāskaravarmana became Satī after the death of the king.⁶¹ The Bṛhaddehmapurāṇa (II.8.3-10) in most eloquent terms praises the exploits of Satī : "...there is no greater exploit for women, because (by performing Satī) she enjoys in heaven the company of her husband for a manvāntara...." ✓

Thus the custom of burning of Satī came into practice in Bengal from an early period. The Yoginī Tantra⁶² which was composed in the late medieval age during the reigns of the rulers of the Kānatā-Koch Kingdom, also stresses merits of self-immolation in Nuktī-tīrtha by the widows of Brahmanas. Śūdra and Vaiśya widows moved by deep sense of love were also enjoined to burn themselves. This practice of Satī however definitely prohibited to unchaste women and women having many children.⁶³ ✓

On the basis of a tradition recorded in the Darrang Vaiśāvalī Amanatulla refers to the queen Sudānī of Mahārāja Viśvasiṅha mounting the funeral pyre.⁶⁴ According to the Vaiśāvalī of Gandharvanārāyaṇa, on hearing the news of the death of Viśvasiṅha, his old father Hariśāsa Mondala died of grief and his mother Hira Devi mounted the funeral pyre with her husband's body. The funeral ceremonies of the father and the son were performed at the same time.⁶⁵ Again, after a reign of 49 years the king Upendranārāyaṇa died at Dhaliyabāri in 1763 A.D. The senior queen placed Devendranārāyaṇa son of the

second queen, on the throne, and ascended the funeral pyre of her husband.⁶⁶

The Sati or the custom of Sahmarana⁶⁷ was prohibited in Koch Bihar in 1849 A.D.

Slavery

Slavery was not unknown in north eastern India including the Kamata-Koch territory. The nobles and persons of respectable position also owned slaves for performing household work and labour of the fields.^{67a}

In the 16th century, a number of slaves were found in the household of Sankaradeva, the Vaishnava reformer.⁶⁸ Stephen Casella who came to Koch Bihar during Lakshminarayana's time remarked about the export of male and female slaves to Bhutan.⁶⁹

Robinson made us believe that 'the slaves were persons taken in war, or brought of the hill tribes, or the descendants of slave'.⁷⁰ Martin supplies with an interesting information about the prevalence of slave trade in the Koch Kingdom. It is said that children were dressed up and sold in the hats or basars.⁷¹ Again, we learn that the people of the neighbouring Bhot or Garo tribe often abducted men and women from Mughal or Koch Bihar territory and make them slaves.⁷² Sometimes slaves were sent to Bengal, Bhutan and upper Burma and they were also made as marriage dowry of rich men's

daughters.⁷³ Peasants were often selling themselves or their wives and children. It appeared that distinction between serfdom and slavery was less accountable, in the absence of the classical form of a dehumanized slavery.⁷⁴ It has been noticed by F. Hamilton that 'about a hundred of pure caste were annually sold to Bengal. They were mostly children; the girls were chiefly bought by prostitutes, and cost from twelve to fifteen rupees. A Koch boy cost twentyfive rupees, a Kolita boy fifty; slaves of impure tribes were sold to the Garos, and many were said to be sent to Naga, from whence they were probably exported to Ava'.⁷⁵ W. Hamilton, however, observes that 'the people of Assam sell many slaves, and those of Cooch Behar are not unwilling to carry on the same trade'.⁷⁶ Ibn Batutāh on his visit to Bengal came to Sodkaman and from there he started for Kāmarūpa which was a month's journey on foot and observed that the people dwelling in the mountains were very hardy servants and slaves.⁷⁷

From the story of 'Sātpusa Vrata' we learn that during that period in the society slaves were bought and sold in the open market. It further informs us that the slaves unlike the other countries were treated as the members of the families and were not surely tortured.⁷⁸

Food

The Gurullā tells us that during the time of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa the people ate fowls, ducks and pigs.⁷⁹ People

of high and low status lived in the Kingdom. Brāhmin-Pandits, officers with the titles Barua, Karmi (Kārji), castes like potters, barbars, washermen, goldsmith and singers, players of musical instruments, actors etc. formed the mixed population of the Capital. The Yoginī Tantra (Uttarakhandā, Patala IX Verse 16) refers to the diet of the people in Kāmarūpa, the flesh of Ducks, Pigeons, tortoise and bears, and warns those who give up eating these animals, that they will come to grief. Again, from the accounts of the Gurulīlā and the Gobānimsāgala, we know that the people ate among others, curd, molasses, sugar, betel-leaf and betel-nut, milk, honey, fish etc.⁸⁰

H.N. Chowdhury writing about the food habit of the people of Koch Kingdom states, "generally two meals are taken : one at about mid-day, and the other shortly after nightfall. In the morning Chira or goora is generally eaten."^{80a} Food was taken twice a day - rice, vegetables, fish, salt, oil and chillies - and worth a penny.⁸¹ At harvest time, there was plenty of food stuff and there was no end of meals. In times of famine and scarcity the case was altogether different.

Sweet milk was a favourite drink for the children. The adults preferred sour or curded milk called dahi. Dahi and chiras with a little salt and couple of green chillis was a favourable food. The people often preferred it to rice.⁸² Campbell says that rice is the staple food of the Rājavāsis.

They also eat pigeon, goats, ducks and wild rabbits. They used spices like onion, garlic, green chillies.⁸³ Tobacco is in wide use. Opium and hemp are also taken by the people. The betel-leaf (pān) and betel-nut (tāmbul) have been in extensive and intensive use through the ages.⁸⁴ Some scholar while commenting on the food habit of the people of this ~~xxxx~~ region, remarked that the per capita intake of rice, fish, meat and leafy vegetables as was higher in the 16th and 17th centuries than in the British period. Salt being expensive, poor people used more of alkāli (jāhāg) as its substitutes.⁸⁵

The people of the Baikantapurā region, as noted by Śrī Jagadindradeva Rāikat, used to take rice and other vegetables.⁸⁶

Dress ✓

The women, as narrated in Gurullā, wore various dresses of white, blue and yellow colour.⁸⁷ Again the women, according to Campbell, used to wear magnificent dresses of red and yellow colour.⁸⁸ It is interesting to note here that the Kālikā-purāṇa forbids the use of garments of blue and red for religious purpose.⁸⁹ The male normally used to wear dhoti, chāddar and the women wore only dhoti. The women used to wear a piece of cloth on the breast. The use of langoti was also in vogue. It had origin in the wants of the people, but the

people accustomed to it like exposure so much that they actually felt uncomfortable in a bigger or fuller raiment.⁹⁰

Both at home and abroad the women liked to be better dressed. When at home, and for ordinary wear, they used to wear a piece of cotton cloth called pāṭāni about 5 feet length, which was wrapped round the body and backed up above the breast so as to reach the knee. When going out the pieces of cloth as large as pāṭāni were worn, one round the waist and the other round the breast. This was called agraṇ.⁹¹

Ornaments ✓

The Gosānīmaṅgala and the Beharādīpta, though not composed in the same period, give us an account of different types of ornaments.⁹² The married women used vermilion above the forehead at the parting of the hair. They also used shell bracelets called śankha generally on the left wrist.

Those who could afford had also silver bangles. Muthā, a kind of silver bracelet, was of common use. Other popular ornaments were silver, gold mālā, necklace, and śukṭi or gold ear ring, nat or nose ring of gold and silver, nakṭal for the nose, śankhāru for the ankle-joint.⁹³

Games ✓

Among the indoor games we have the information of

the following : Chau-roti, Shatchares-pekta, Khalchak, Mogal-pathāo or sola-paitā, shaker-chal, Bāch-hāchini and Te-parta. The nature of these games are not, however, always clear.⁹⁴

It is interesting to note that king Prānanārāyaṇa used to entertain during the spring season with the beautiful ladies every year. During these two months he did not look after the administration of the Kingdom. He had deep passion for music. He is said to have composed a treatise on music.^{94a}

Music was an essential thing for public entertainment. The musical instruments of the people as narrated in the Rāgrang RāisVānsavali, are Gonch, Bell, Kartāle, Dundubhi, Dhak, Dhol, Dakka, Nāṅkā, Rābhena, Kabilāsa, Kheniarika, Mohori, Dotkā, Rakā, Sāringā, Bāsi, Zhili, Zhinirikā, Budraka, Tokāri, Tudi, Mrdanga, Mandira, Khola, Dhamsai, Gosona, Moxuri, Upanga, Barkāṅka, Mambai, Joykālī, Yaxi, Rānsingā, Rāntāle, Zhoniorā, Gomkha, Birkālī, SingheVāna, Tabela, Dacari, Dholaka, Mādala, Tāl etc.⁹⁵

Notes and References

- 1 D.C.Sircar, Problems of Early Indian Social History, Calcutta, 1933, p.39.
- 2 Risle, The Tribes and Castes of Bengal, Vol.I, XVff.
- 3 R.C.Majumdar (ed.), History of Bengal, Vol.I, p.566.

It may be mentioned that the formation of castes from tribal groups is a characteristics of the Social life in all periods of Indian history (D.C.Sircar, Studies in the Society and Administration of Ancient Medieval India, Vol.I, Delhi, 1957, p.105) Manusmṛiti and other works on law are eager to include all Aryans, Non-aryans and foreign tribes and communities into the theoretical schens of the Catur-varṇa. The attempt was mainly to represent these tribal or foreign communities as a Vrātya (or degraded) class of Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya or Vaiśya or as ṣ originated from an admixture of blood of two or more of the four conventional varṇas.

See D.C.Sircar, Problems of Early Indian Social History, p.40. According to the evidence of the Yoginītantra, a product of the late medieval period the plca or the Bhūtās, the Samar or the Assamese, the Kuvāsa or the Koch who govern Vihar and the yavay or the Barbarians of the west are descendants of Haihoyo and Talojonggho, the degraded Kṣatriyas (Buchanan, J.A.S.B. No.73, 1838, p.11).

- 4 Cf. The Brhad-dharma purāna, (ed. in Bibliotheca Indica Series, Pts. I & II); R.C.Majumdar ed., op.cit., pp.567 ff.

5 Cf. Brāhmaṇa Kṣatriya Vaiśya Sūdra Cārijatī |

Pari pari praname bhakati bhāve āti || -V 637

K.C.Pathak (ed.), Gurullā, p.105.

Also the people of these four Varnas (Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Sūdra) are said to have acknowledged Viśvasimha's accession to the throne. See Ghosal, op.cit., p.111.

6 Cf. Bipra Kṣatrigon Vaiśya Sūdra jan āno nana jāticay |

Kariā bivad dilā pariched bhāge bhāge āticay || -791

Samsta jātik bhinna karilek uttan madhya kari

Kato sakalek hīn karilek sāstra bhāva anusāri || V-792

Rājā Harendranārāyaṇa, Bṛhat Rājasmāsāvalī, quoted in

N.N.Vasu's Social History of Kamarupa, p.58, Vol.II,

New Delhi, Reprint.

7 F.Hamilton, An Account of Assam, edited by S.K.Bhuyan,

Ganhati, 1940; p.52.

S.N.Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p.22.

7a Hunter, A Statistical Account of Assam, Vol.I, First published

1879, Reprinted, Delhi, 1975, pp.29-35.

8 M.Neog, Sankaradeva and His times, p.76.

Regarding Kalitās following observations have been made by the different scholars :

(i) Mārkandeya Purāṇa refers to Kulta along with Darada, Gana etc. (Chap.55)

(ii) Dalton (Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, pp.321-322)

Considers Kalitās to be the Aryans of Pure descent, who came to the Province before the formation of existing

professional castes

- (iii) Baden Powel, however, ranked them (the Kalitās) in class who were formerly Buddhists but they had to seek refuge in the hills from the mid-India following the subsequent Brahmanic revival. He remarks that 'there are scattered remnants of these once ruling houses still existing under the name Kulta or Kalita Caste', - The Indian Village Community, London, 1896, pp. 125 ff.
- (iv) Martin, on the other hand, refers to their unorthodox character, and says that they are independent of the Brāhmaṇa priests. (Eastern India, Vol. III, p. 545).
- (v) Gait mentions Kalitās as kāyasthas and as a predominating caste who were enlightened and advanced. (A History of Assam, p. 258).
- (vi) Hunter observed that the Kalitās were the agriculturists. They were the priests of the Koch rulers before the advent of the Brāhmaṇas. And they appeared to have been a superior race. Hunter, op. cit., p. 32.

9 N.N. Vasu, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 58.

10 Loc. cit.

11 Rājā Harendranārāyaṇa, op. cit., padas (1793-1794)

(Vide Assam Govt. Collection, Darrang, No. 2, 1st part).

12 N.N. Vasu, op. cit., p. 60.

13 H.C. Sharma (ed.), op. cit., p. 68.

14 Cf. Kāmrūpa dvijagan paramasōvan | Vedācar kari grhe grhe thāke

raṅgman ||

Binā tīrthasnāne sūddeha kari saṅkār | deś desantare vrami

rukare bicār ||

Pūnka Van ādi karma Ved byabhar | Karanta Brāhmaṅgane

ācar bicār

Kṛsikama karāl Bipragan pravartay | matsya māṅksa tāmbulak

bhojan karay ||

Rājā Harendranārāyaṇa, op.cit., padas - 130-132.

15 'Cf Bāro Bhuyān āche laṅḍādev mukhya kari |

Viśvasiṅha nāme pāche bhalla nareśvar ||

Sirirān Khāko chalsūdde zinilek |

Āno bhuyān samostaka basya karilek ||

S.C.Goswami, (ed.), op.cit., (Intro.p.26.)

It is said that Kusumavara, a Bhuyān Chief who was the father of the Vaiṣṇava reformer Śaṅkaradeva was defeated by Viśvasiṅha.

16 Ibid., (Intro: p.26)

17 N.H.Vasu, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.64ff.

18 Ibid., pp.71-72.

19 S.C.Goswami (ed.), op.cit., p.46; H.N.Dutta Barua (ed.)

Guruarita, pp.15-16 & p.547.

20 Ibid., p.72.

21 M.Neog, op.cit., p.75.

22 N.C.Sharma (ed.), op.cit., p.37.

This Group of people, as mentioned in the above book,

had been engaged in the treatment of various diseases. They were acquainted with the uses of various drugs prepared from plants. They were also adept in charms and incantations. They knew the ideas as referred to in the Vedas and could also prescribe good diet.

- 23 Epigraphia Indica, Vol.XVII, pp.291-309; Indian Antiquary, Bombay, 1893, pp.57 ff.
- 24 R.C.Majumder, History of Bengal, Vol.I, p.590.
Cf. Brahma-Vaivarta Purana's story regarding Vaidya in Visvakosa S.V. Vaidyajāti.
- 24a D.C.Sircar, Studies in Society and Administration of Ancient and Medieval India, Vol.I, pp.21ff.
- 24b D.C.Sircar, op.cit., p.113.
- 25 Daityāri Thākura, Mahāpurāṇa Śrī Śaṅkaradeva aru Mādhavadeva Carita, ed. by H.N.Dutta Barua, p.168.
- 25a Manu, X, 34.
- 26 Fick, Soziale Entwicklung, 302.
- 27 R.C.Majumder, History of Bengal, Vol.I, p.591.
- 28 Cf. The story of Vallāla Carita mentioned in the History of Bengal, Vol.I, p.240.
- 29 B.K.Barua, A Cultural History of Assam, op.cit., p.128.
- 29a Robinson, A Descriptive Account of Assam, 1841, Delhi, Reprint 1975, p.263.
- 30 B.K.Barua, op.cit., p.127.

30a Cf. the Bṛhad-Dharma Purāṇa II-XIV, 75;

Also see R.C. Majumder (ed.), History of Bengal, Vol. I, p. 573.

31 Cf. Graha nakṣatrasa gati rāsi yorā Grantha |

Bhūṣ Bhaviṣyat varttanānak jānanta || V. 177.

31 N.C. Sharma (ed.), op. cit., pp. 36-37; N.N. Paul (ed.),

Gosāṁsāgala, p. 37.

31a Cf. Brāhmaṇa Daivajña Santa Mahanta jatek |

Gāye gāye saṁhāko tusilā pratyek ||

See N.C. Sharma (ed.), op. cit., p. 64.

32 N.C. Sharma, op. cit., Intro., pp. 17-18;

Bṛhensvārī Devī, Behāradanta, Cooch Behar, 1330 B.S.,
ed. by Nirūpamā Devā, pp. 53-54.

N. Paul (ed.), Gosāṁsāgala, p. 25.

33 A. Guha, Mughal North East India: Polity, Society and
Economy 1200-1750 A.D., ^{Occasional Paper No. 19} Calcutta, 1978, p. 14.

34 Loc. cit.

35 N.N. Vasu, op. cit., p. 81.

36 Cf. Kaivartta kalitā koch Brāhmaṇa sanasta |

Ekiage khāl dūdh cirā kalājata ||

H.N. Dutta Barua (ed.), Mahāpurusa śrī Saṅkaradeva śru

Śrīnāthadeva Carita, p. 168.

37 H.N. Dutta Barua (ed.), op. cit., p. 181.

38 S.N. Sharma, A Contemporary of Guru Nanak. Shankaradeva,

Published in the Journal of Sikh Studies, Amritsar,

1978, p. 133.

- 39 N.N.Vasu, op.cit., Vol.I, p.74.
- 40 Ibid., p.78.
- 41 Ibid., p.64.
- 42 Br̄ndesvārī Devī, Beharodants, pp.54-56.
Also see K.C.Pathak (ed.), op.cit., pp.104-105.
- 43 Monika Roychoudhury, Koch Biharē Rājā Amalē Nārī Pragatir Rūpa Rekha (an article in Bengali)
Published in Koch Bihar Sāhitya Sabhā Patrikā (Bengali),
1380 (Bengali San), pp.25-26.
- 44 Cf. sei gr̄me Madhujālī dehidror dhām |
Tār nārī mahāsati dhare Sītā nām ||
N.N.Paul (ed.), Gosānī Mangala, p.37.
- 45 Cf. Punnyabati ei Sati, Kṛṣṇa padē sadā mati,
Kṛṣṇa padē bādha sarbakṣen
Ibid., p.43.
- 46 H.S.Bhattacharyya & S.S.Bhattacharyya,
Koch Biharer Prācin Vratakathā, Burdwan University,
1983, Intro: p.10.
- 47 Ibid., Intro: p.15.
- 47a N.C.Sharma (ed.), op.cit., p.70.
- 48 H.S.Bhattacharyya & S.S.Bhattacharyya, op.cit., Intro: p.17.
- 49 Loc.cit.
- 50 A.C.Campbell, A Comprehensive Archaeological, Biographical and Pictorial History of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa,
Vol.I, Chapter - 'Glimpses of Bengal' tr. of the portion on
Cooch Behar by N.N.Paul in Bengali, Calcutta, 1979, p.3; Also

see H.N.Chowdhury, The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement, 1903, p. 132.

50a Cf. Asvalayana Grhyasūtra, 1, 6, 1-8;

Also see B Śadhāyana, 1, no. 1-2, Gautama, IV, 6-15.

50b Manu, 111, 24-251.

50c N.C.Chowdhury (ed.), Rāikat Vaisā O Tāhāder Rājyer Saṁkṣpta Vivarana (in Bengali), Jalpaiguri, 3rd ed. 1983, pp. 6-7.

51 H.N.Chowdhury, op. cit., p. 144;

Cf. Gāndharva bivāhe bihā karilā saksat |

Nṛtya gīt bādya bhāndya bajāḥ asankhyat ||

Brāhman Daivajña santa mahanta jatek |

Dāne Māne Samastake Tuṣilā Pratyek || - V. 236.

The Darrang Rāia Vaisāvalī (pp. 46-47) records the Gāndharva marriages of mahārājā Viśvasimha. The marriages of eighteen queens were said to have performed in one day.

S.C.Ghosal informs us of a case which was lodged against Makaranda deva, of the Rāikat family of Baikantapurā, who took possession of the zamindari by one Rājendranārāyaṇa alleging that Makarandadeva was born of a woman of Gopa (milkman) caste, but in the judgement of the Sudder Dewani Ādalat this mixed marriage was held to be valid (8th February 1853 A.D.) and Makarandadeva became the fifteenth Rāikat.

See A History of Cooch Behar, p. 236.

- 52 Cf. Sambandha Viveka, fol. 2b.
- 52a H.N. Chowdhury, op.cit., pp. 144-45.
- 53 C LIW. 5.
- 54 Yājñya Valkya Smṛti with a commentary of Viśvarūpa, I. 63.
- 55 Brahmapurāna, quoted by Aparārka on yaj. I. 68.69.
- 56 Medhatithi on Manu, VIII, 225.
- 57 H.N. Chowdhury (op.cit., p. 146) provides us with the information that the issue of the Union, under a recent ruling of the State Council, has not the status of a legitimate child, and does not succeed to the man's property.
- 58 Col. Dalton, Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, pp. 91-92.
- 59 N.C. Sharma (ed.), pp. 46-47.
- 60 S.C. Ghosal, op.cit., p. 152.
- 61 B.K. Barua, op.cit., p. 134.
- 62 Yoginī Tantra, II, Verses 302-303.
- 63 Loc. cit.
- 64 S.C. Ghosal, op.cit., p. 124.
- 65 Loc. cit.
- 66 H.N. Chowdhury, op.cit., p. 243.
- 67 Ibid., p. 283.
- 67a Gait, op.cit., p. 255.

'David Scott is said to have released 14,000 slaves in Kamarupa alone'. A. Guha says that Chāsua pāiks were also said to have managed to carry on cultivation with one, two or more slaves and bondsmen.
See the occasional paper 19, p. 54.

68 U.C.Lekharu⁽²⁾, Katha-Gura-Grita, p.619.

69 S.C.Ghosal, op.cit., p.188.

70 Robinson, A Descriptive Account of Assam, p.204.

First Pub. 1841, Delhi, 1978.

71 Martin, Eastern India, Vol.III, p.681.

Also see S.Turner, An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Teshoo Lama in Tibet ed. by H.K.Kuloy, Manjusri Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971 (Reprint), p 11

72 S.C.Ghosal, op.cit., p.279.

73 A.Guha, op.cit., p.37.

74 Ibid., p.38.

In the Ahom territory, as Guha says, "slaves, serfs and bondsmen, together constituted 5 to 9 per cent of the population". While describing social conditions under the Ahoms, Gait has also observed that the slaves who lost their liberty by mortgaging their persons for a loan, were brought and sold in open market. The price was ranging from about twenty rupees for an adult male of good taste to three rupees for a low caste girl".

Also see A History of Assam, p.255, 3rd ed. Reprint 1967;

Also see M'cosh Topography of Assam, pp.26ff, Calcutta, 1887.

75 F.Hamilton, An Account of Assam, edited by S.K.Bhuyan, Gauhati, 1940, p.74.

76 W.Hamilton, A Geographical, Statistical and Historical Description of Hindoostan, Vol.I, p.207.

- 77 Ibn Batutah's Account of Bengal, Eng. Tr. by H.N.Dey,
Calcutta, 1978, p. 9.
- 78 H. Bhattacharyya & S. Bhattacharyya, op. cit., p. 7.
- 79 K.C. Pathak (ed.), Gurulila, p. 98.
- 80 Ibid., p. 104; N.N. Paul (ed.),
Gosānīmangala, p. 32.
- 80a H.N. Chowdhury, op. cit., p. 137.
- 81 S.C. Ghosal, op. cit., p. 279.
- 82 H.N. Chowdhury, loc. cit.
- 83 Campbell, op. cit., p. 4. Tr. by N.N. Paul (in Bengali)
- 84 H.N. Chowdhury, loc. cit.
- 85 A. Guha, op. cit., p. 39.
- 86 N.C. Chowdhury, (ed.), op. cit., p. 6.
- 87 K.C. Pathak (ed.), op. cit., pp. 104-05.
- 88 Campbell, tr. by N.N. Paul, op. cit., p. 5.
- 89 B.K. Barua, op. cit., pp. 145-46.
- 90 H.N. Chowdhury, op. cit., p. 135.
- 91 Ibid., pp. 134-35.
- 92 N.N. Paul (ed.) Gosānī Mangala, p. 9.
Cf. Hastete balay dilā padete nūpur |
Katite kinkini dilā gale matihār ||
- 93 Campbell, op. cit., tr. by N.N. Paul, p. 4,
& also H.N. Chowdhury, op. cit., p. 135.

94 Ibid., p. 138.

94a Biswanath Das (ed.), Rājopākhyāna, p. 31.

95 N.C. Sharma, op.cit., Intro : 19.

SECTION II

EDUCATION AND GROWTH OF LITERATURE

The ancient Brahmanical sacred law laid down a comprehensive scheme of Vedic education for students belonging to the first three classes of Hindu social system.¹ But the Smṛti authorities unlike those of the Gupta and the earlier periods, seldom refer to technical education. The Bhavisavattakha, a tenth century Jaina text, however, gives an interesting account of the training of a young merchant.²

The education that was imparted to the pupils through the agency of one of our traditional institutions, namely the public recitations of the Epics, the Purāṇas and other religious works were at a later period accessible even to the lowest strata of the society. The inscriptions of early medieval India refer from time to time to endowments made by pious donors with this object.

The Koch Kings during the period under review also brought the Brāhmanas from different places as mentioned earlier and gave encouragement for the dissemination of Sanskrit learning and education. Sanskrit talas (Schools) were said to have existed from the 16th century onwards at Koch Bihar. The subjects taught were "the four Vedas, the fourteen Sāstras,

the eighteen Purānas, the Mahābhārata, the sixteen Vyākaraṇas, the eighteen Kāvyas, the eighteen Kośas, and Arthasāstra,^{2a} besides yoga-sāstra and texts on Kāithālī or Mathematics (the learning followed by Kāyasthas or clerks and Accountants).^{2a} For advanced study the people would go to places like Mithilā (Darbhanga), Śāntipura and Navadvīpa in Bengal, and to Varāṇasī. We learn that Malladeva (Naranārāyaṇa) and Sukladhvaja, songs of Viśvasimha were sent to Varāṇasī where they acquired education in the hermitage of a saint named Brahmananda Svāmī. They became adept in grammar, literature, astronomy, the Vedas, the Smṛtis, Nyaya, Mīmāṃsā and Purānas. Goṣāṇīśāgala (composed in 1825 A.D.)^{2b} describes how the pupils were taught at the residences of Brāhmaṇa Gurus (teachers). The students had to stay at such venerable institutions of the Brāhmaṇa Gurus and they acquired learning in Bengali, Sanskrit, Vyākaraṇas, Kāvyas, Sāstras, Tantras and Mantras etc.

The Rājanākhyaṇa,³ also mentions about the establishment of educational institutions throughout the Kingdom during the reign period of Virṅarāyaṇa and Prāṇanārāyaṇa. Virṅarāyaṇa is said to have had strict watch on the progress of education. The children of the Brāhmaṇas, kings, ministers, officers, gatekeepers etc. were sent to those institutions for study.

Regarding women education, mention has already been made that the Queens of the Kāṇatā-Kośh kingdom, like

Bhānumatī, Brādesvarī Devī, Kāmesvarī Devī and Nirūpanā Devī played an important part in the growth of language and literature and in the spread of education among the women. It may be noted here that the rulers of the Kāmatā-Koch Bihar, apart from their encouragement to religious compositions, also patronised for the secular writing in the kingdom.

As regards the growth of literature in the Kāmatā-Koch Kingdom, an attempt may be made to discuss it from two angles : (1) literary compositions by the Mahārājās themselves and the Court poets; (ii) literary contributions from the Neo-vaishnava preachers like Śaṅkaradeva, Mādhavadeva and Dāmodaradeva.

The Kāmarūpī language was cultivated in the royal court of Durlabhanārāyaṇa, who possibly flourished in the second quarter of the fourteenth century A.D. He patronised three poets viz., Hema Sarasvatī, Harihara Vipra and Kaviratna Sarasvatī.⁴ Hema Sarasvatī was a follower of devotee of Hara-Gaurī and Hari. His predilection to Bhakti cult has been mentioned in Hiranyakesinīśabdha chapter of work on Praband-Cerita.⁵ He wrote two other books viz. Narasimha Purana and Hara-Gaurī Saṁvāda. Harihara Vipra translated the Asvamedha Parva of the Mahābhārata, while Kaviratna Sarasvatī translated the Drupadaparva of the same epic.

The Poet Pitārvara who was the contemporary of

Viśvasiṃha, wrote the Nala Damayanti episode of the Mahābhārata. He is said to have composed the book at the request of Samar Śiṃha (Sukladhvaja) son of Viśvasiṃha at 1466 Śaka corresponding to A.D. 1544.⁶ He also translated into Bengali verse the stories contained in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāna.⁷ Another work accomplished by Pīṭambhara at the instance of Sukladhvaja, was the translation of the 10th Canto of the Bhāgavata Purāna between 1514-33 A.D.⁸ Mānkara and Durgāvara were the Court poets of Viśvasiṃha. Mānkara in his Manasā-maṅgala uses the name Mārāiyā for Manasā (Mārāiyā māḍali jagok jateka barati'.... i.e., let all the devotees be ready in the pavillion of the Goddess). Mārāi means a scourge of death or epidemic. It has been mentioned in Chapter III that the worship of Bisahari (Manasā) was greatly popularised. The Goddess is still being propitiated to get rid of epidemics and natural calamities.⁹

Mahārājā Naranārāyaṇa's period witnessed a spectacular development in the field of language and literature. It was during his reign the Sanskrit learning was immensely improved. Sanskrit became the chief vehicle of expression. The conversation was conducted in the royal court in Sanskrit. Even the people used to speak in Sanskrit.¹⁰ His court was always adorned with pundits, and in his time Sanskrit learning was greatly popularised. Bhūṣeṇa, a Brāhmaṇa was the court poet. Gunabhiram Barua informs us that before Śaṅkaradeva and Nāḍhavadeva's advent in Assam with their literary treasure, Sanskrit

was taught in the toles established in different places of the country.¹¹ With the Vaisnava revival under Śaṅkaraḍeva, Mādhavaḍeva and Dāmodaraḍeva, there was an impetus to the use of the popular regional language as the medium of expressions. The books composed by these religious reformers were introduced in the various Sātras for learning. King Naraṅarāyaṅa issued an injunction asking the Scholars to translate the noted Sanskrit classics, which he thought, would be useful "for the edification and study of women and sūdra, at the present time, and of the Brahmanas at a later stage".¹² Kavi Rāmasarḍvatī, the court poet of Naraṅarāyaṅa gave an idea about the royal patronage in one of his 'Bhaṅgitaḅ'. He wrote : "My sovereign commanded me to translate the Mahābhārata into verse ; He offered to place before me all the commentaries available at the royal court. He sent cart-loads of texts to my residence and encouraged me in my work with adeqate money, clothing, apparel and servants".¹³ Thus the poet translated into Sanskrit the whole of the Mahābhārata. The work consists Yogaṅkya, Bhisṅaṅkya, Virāṅkya, Udyogaṅkya, Aśḍmedhaṅkya, etc. Ananta Kaṅḍali, another poet wrote a Kāvya, Sāvitri upāḅhyāna of the Mahābhārata. We come across a manuscript on Rājasāya of the Mahābhārata composed by him at that period.¹⁴ He also wrote ŚrīRāma Kīrtana.

In 1555 A.D. Naraṅarāyaṅa sent a Letter to the Ahom King Sukhaṅphā, Khora Rāja through his envoys requesting the

letter to establish friendship between the two kings. This letter considered to be first letter written in Bengali Drama style.^{14a}

At the request of Bhānumatī, the Chief queen of Naranārāyaṇa, Purusottama Vidyāvāgīśa composed the celebrated Sanskrit grammar, Prayoga Ratnamālā (in Śaka 1499 i.e. 1568 A.D.) which was taught in many toles in Koch Bihar and Ahom kingdom extensively.¹⁵ Raghudeva was taught with the help of this Grammar.¹⁶ The queen Bhānumatī was said to have well-versed in Pāṇinī and Kalāpa-avyākaraṇas.¹⁷ Naranārāyaṇa also encouraged the writing of secular literature. Under his instructions Bakul Kāyastha composed 'Bhūmi Parimāna' and translated Līlāvati. He is said to have compiled on a poetical treatise Kitāba Maṅgiri on Arithmetic, land-surveying and Book-keeping.^{17a} The royal astrologer wrote a book named 'Jyotiṣa'. Siddhānta Vāgīśa, who was celebrated under the Cognomen 'Jagatguru', wrote many treatise on Smṛti entitled 'Kaṇḍī' and translated Sanskrit works into Bengali.

We learn that Naranārāyaṇa composed a dictionary entitled Malladevī Abhidhāna, which, however, could not be discovered as yet. The poet Kānsari who flourished at his court translated some portions of Virāṭaparva and Kirāṭaparva of the Mahābhārata.¹⁸

It is said that Naranārāyaṇa took a keen interest in extending education to the common people. A few persons

belonging to Kāyastha and Kalitā castes were engaged in writing books on Arithmetic etc. ¹⁹

Naranārāyaṇa was not merely a great patron of learning and education, but was himself well versed in different Sāstras. He was described as the Vikramāditya of Kāmarūpa. ²⁰

Vipraprasāda flourished at the court of Mahārāja Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa and wrote the following books : Vikāṅkavya, Jananavya and Kaṣṭha Parva. Govinda Misra another court poet of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa translated the eighteen parvas of the Bhāgavata Gītā. This translated work of Gītā was considered to be the only work at that period in Eastern India. ²¹

Sri Kavisekhara was the court poet of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa. He rendered into translation the Kirātaparva of the Mahābhārata, the manuscript of which is still preserved in the State library in Koch Bihar. ²²

During Prānanārāyaṇa's time the state of language and education reached to a great height. All officers and courtiers of the king used to speak in Sanskrit and the king established a Pundit Sabha known as the Pañcārṣṭha (five jewels i. e. five learned men). ²³ Kaviratna, being patronised by the King wrote history of the royal dynasty in Sanskrit entitled Rājakhanda. Śrīnātha Brāhmana, the court poet also translated Ādiparva, Bṛhaspatisya Parva, ²⁴ Virātaparva of the

Bhishmaparva of the Mahābhārata was translated by Dvija Rāma. The poet described Mahāndranārāyana as the lord of Kānata, 31

Nārāyana Dvija, the court poet of Upendranārāyana, at the instance of Kumār Khagendranārāyana, the brother of the king translated the Nāradiya Purāna into verse which is preserved in the Cooch Behar State library.

Vaiṣṇava Literature

Śaṅkaradeva, the Vaiṣṇava reformer was not only successful in the propagation of religious teachings, but he was also equally famous as a great scholar and a poet as well. He drew inspiration chiefly from the Bhāgavata, being the quintessence of the Vedānta philosophy and made it into translation. His outstanding literary contribution was the Kīrttana Ghosa which contains several Kīrttana songs. 32 He has rendered translation of the Bhāgavatapurāṇa for which he was accused before the Koch King Naranārāyaṇa by the Brāhmanas. Śaṅkaradeva said the king that Bhāgavata reading was equally essential for the Brāhmanas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Sūdras. This could easily be made accessible even to the Sūdras. 33 His longer narrative episodes comprised Harishchandra-upākhyāna, Rukmiṇīharanākāya, Ajāmilopākhyāna, Amartasanthana Kāvya, Kuruksetra Kāvya etc. 34

He translated the last Canto of the Rāmāyana.

His next works may be discussed under theological and cosmological categories. He wrote (i) Bhakti Pradīna which denounces the worship of other deities in preference to Kṛṣṇa-bhakti, (ii) Nīlī-Nayasiddha-śāstrīya, (iii) Bhaktiratnākara (Sanskrit). He also composed verses in Sanskrit. He used mainly the language of the region as the medium of writing, but in rhyme and rhythm he followed the Brajaboli, in which style the Poet Jayadeva composed Gīta-Govinda.³⁶

He also wrote a devotional work Guṇamālā which highlighted mental speed and brevity.³⁶

Śaṅkaradeva composed a good number of dramas viz. Sītā-Svayamvara, Kṛṣṇa Guṇamālā, Pānīprasāda, Kāliyā-damaṇa, Keligopala, Pāṅgātaharṣa, Rukminīharṣa, Rāma-vijaya Kāvya etc.³⁷ The dramas were written to spearhead the cause of Vaiṣṇavism and to create devotional sentiments in the audience. His plays expressed love, devotion and heroism.

Śaṅkaradeva introduced the Baṅ-gīt or (Vara-gīta) devotional poems which dealt with religious experiences, philosophic reflections on the world and mortality, and poignant introspection of the self. The Baṅgīts already attained popularity and were also composed by later poets amongst whom many were women.³⁸

Among the ancient manuscripts collected recently

by the Government of Assam, many of them were written under the encouragement of the king Naranārāyaṇa. The patronage of the Mahārājā Naranārāyaṇa is acknowledged in the Colophons of many of the works of Śaṅkaradeva.³⁹ The outstanding product of Mādhavadeva, the disciple of Śaṅkaradeva, was Nāna Ghoṣā. He wrote Nāna-mālikā at the request of Virupākṣa Kārṣi, the minister of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa.⁴⁰ He followed the Brajbolī style in writing Bargits and dramas.⁴¹ Mādhavadeva also wrote a commentary on Śaṅkaradeva's Bhakti-Ratnākara. His one act plays also received a great appreciation by the people of Kāṣṭā Koṣh Bihar.

The literature that grew during the period of our study under the orders or encouragements of the kings or individual initiation of the poets, had a tremendous reflection on the religion of the contemporary period and the Epics. The religious movement that spread over the State of Koṣh Bihār under Śaṅkaradeva and his followers, was made possible for its acceptance to the people because of these literary works. Śaṅkaradeva brought Bhakti in the literature of the Kāṣṭā-Koṣh-Raj-Darbar. It can be estimated that stories covering the aspects of religion had become the chief constituent in writing the various books. The writers of the Kāṣṭā Koṣh Court used prose in literature. They were the harbinger in this field. This style was, however, followed by the writers of Bengal at a later period.

Notes and References

- 1 R.C.Majumdar, The Age of Imperial Kanauj, 2nd ed. Bombay, 1964. p. 388.
- 2 Bhavisayattakshā, ed. by Jacobi, Introduction, 3f
- 2a S.K.Chatterjee, The place of Assam in the History and Civilisation of India, p.74.
- 2b N.N.Paul (ed.), Gosāinśāhā, p.8.
- 3 Biswanath Das (ed.), Rājopākhyāna, p.31. The Rājopākhyāna of Jaygnath Munshi was composed in 1823 A.D.
- 4 N.N.Acharyya, The History of the Medieval Assam, p. 161.
- 5 A.K.Chakravartti, Literature in Kānatā Koch Bihar Rāj-Darbhāṅg, Dhubri (Assam), 1964, p. 29.
- 6 Durgadas Majumdar, West Bengal District Gazetteers - Koch Bihar, Calcutta, 1977, p. 172.
- 7 Shashi Bhushan Das Gupta (ed.), A Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manuscripts Preserved in the State Library of Cooch Behar, The Cooch Behar State, 1948, Manuscript No. 8, p. 7.
- 8 Ibid., Manuscript No. 58, p. 62.
It may be mentioned here that the complete version of the Bhāgavata (Rājā Khanda) is only available at the Akshaya Kumar Naitreya Museum, North Bengal University (Darjeeling). The book has recently been edited by Dr. Bimalendu Dasg.
- 9 Durgadas Majumdar, op.cit., p. 172.

10 Cf. Sabe loke smiskṛta bacana bolaya | V.822

H.N.Dutta Barua (ed.), Mahāpuruṣa Śrī Śaṅkaradeva

Śrī Śrī Mādhavadeva Garita, Nalbari Assam, 1945, pp.180-181.

11 Gunabhiram Barua, Assam Burañi, Gauhati, Reprint, 1972, p, 183.

12 S.K.Bhuyan, Studies in the Literature of Assam,
Gauhati, 1956, p.128.

Cf. Saupratike Strive sūdre nariba istane

Kichu Śeṣe bhalle naribek biprasne V.606

N.C.Sharma (ed.) Darrang Rājavāsāvalī, p.124.

13 B.K.Barua, Assamese Language and Early Assamese

Literature, Aspects of the Heritage of Assam,

Edited by K.N.Dutta, Gauhati, 1959, p.63.

King Naranārāyana also ordered Rāma Sarasvatī to
translate the whole of the Rāmāyana and the eighteen
Purāṇas :

Cf. Āru āche sapṭakaṇḍa Rāmāyana jata |

Ślokek bhāṅgiā kariyo sauprata ||

Aṣṭādasa Purāṇara kariyok Pada | V.607

N.C.Sharma, (ed.), op. cit., p.124.

14 S.B.Das Gupta, op.cit., p.121 Manuscript, No.102.

14a Cf. The letter of Naranārāyana ^{Sent} to the Ahom King

Cf. Prācīn Bāñcī Patra Śaṅkalan by S.N.Sen, Calcutta
University, 1942.

15 Cf. Ratna mālā guru Grantha karikā |
Āmār nāmak sūchi Granthe lekhiok ||

.....

.....

Smṛanta ādeś tīhi bolā na Marilā |
Ānandate Ratnamālā sāstrak nirūlā ||

Verses 1825-27.

Rājā Harendranārāyana, Bṛhat Rājavamsāvalī

16 S.C.Ghosal, A History of Gooch Behar, p. 184.

17 H.N. Vasu, The Social History of Kamarupa, Vol. II, p. 72.

17a H.C. Goswami (ed.), Descriptive Catalogue of Assamese Manuscripts, Calcutta University, 1930, pp. 93-94.

The date of composition of the said work by
 Bakul Kāyastha shown in this book is 1434 A.D., which
 however, seems to be wrong.

18 A.K. Chakravartty, op. cit., p. 69.

19 G. Barua, op. cit., p. 183.

20 Āssam Sāhitva Sabbār Adhibeśanar
Sabbāntir ebhibhāṣana, p. 40, quoted by S.C. Ghosal,
op. cit., p. 165fn.

21 A.K. Chakravartty, op. cit., p. 86.

22 S.B. Dasgupta, op. cit., p. 105, Manuscript, No. 90.

23 Bisvenath Das, op. cit., p. 33.

24 S.B. Dasgupta, op. cit., pp. 87-91, Manuscript Nos. 77 & 78.

25 Ibid., p. 3.

Manuscript No. 3.

- 26 S.C.Ghosal, op.cit., p.203.
- 27 Biswanath Das, op.cit., p.33.
- 28 S.C.Ghosal, op.cit., p.204.
- 29x From the Descriptive Catalogue of Assamese Manuscripts,
it is observed that the name of the commentary on
Pragoga Ratnamālā as composed in Sanskrit by
Jayakṛṣṇa Deva was Padmañīgi. See H.C.Goswami (ed.),
op.cit., pp.227-28.
- 29 A.K.Chakravartty, op.cit., p.73.
- 30 S.B.Dasgupta, op.cit., p.98, Manuscript No.85.
- 31 Cf. Kāmatār pati Mahīndra Nṛpati
Tar ājñā paramāṇe |
Ibid., Manuscript 94, p.111.
- 32 M.Neog, Śaṅkaradeva, New Delhi, 1967, p.48.
- 33 H.N.Datta Barua, op.cit., p.181.
- 34 S.N.Sharma, A Contemporary of Guru Nanaka-Śaṅkara Deva,
published in the Journal of Sikh Studies, Vol.V,
No.1, Amritsar, 1978, p.141.
- 35 A.K.Chakravartty, op.cit., p.40.
- 36 M.Neog, op.cit., p.48.
- 37 S.N.Sharma, op.cit., p.142.
- 38 M.Neog, Assiyā Sāhityar Būna-Rekhā,
Gauhati, 1962, pp.84-101.
- 39 Ghosal, op.cit., p.165.
- 40 Ibid., p.180.
- 41 Haranohan Das (ed.), Nāṅ Ghosa, Gauhati, 1957,
Intro: p.11.

CHAPTER V

ECONOMIC LIFE

Unlike many other kingdoms of contemporary India, the kingdom of Kāmata-Koch Bihar suffers from paucity of materials in respect of the studies of its economic condition. In spite of this difficulty outlines of economic life and activities of the people, that we gather from those of the adjoining areas and also from a few contemporary literary evidences and travellers' accounts, enables us to place it on firm foundation.

The villages in India played a significant part in the economic life of the people of India from the early days, that is to say the people lived a rural life with agriculture as their chief occupation.

Agriculture also constituted the main occupation of the people of Kāmata-Koch Bihar kingdom. For the purpose of irrigation the villages generally grew up around the rivers and rivulets. Agriculture was looked upon as noble profession by the people including those of the Brāhmaṇas.¹ A point to be noted here is that "manual labour was never looked upon with any odium or disgrace".² It may be mentioned that Hari Dāsa (Harīā) who became the 'Maṇḍal' or the King of Ciknājhāra used to plough lands and produce Kārnāsa Cotton.³ The place names like Khāmar Khātā (Farm-yard), Golābāri (Farm),

Mahishāthān (Buffalo-shed) etc. all in the Kānatā-Koch Kingdom testify to the popularity of agriculture. Dāmodaradeva, a Brāhmana disciple of Śaṅkaradeva was said to have engaged slaves in cultivation⁴ and they took immense interest in agriculture.⁵ Gosāināngala, a literary composition of the 18th century, also refers to farmers who often complained to one Brāhmana named Śasīpātra for the loss caused to their cornfields by his cows.⁶ The pasture (Go-cāraṅghūni) was normally located near the villages.⁷ Here in the Gosāināngala, reference has also been made to pasture where Kāntanātha, the cow-boy of Śasīpātra used to tend the cattle.⁸ Oxen were mostly used for agriculture, but cows were also sometimes employed in ploughing.⁹

The king made land grants to Bei or Ojhā encouraging them for making proper treatment of the animal diseases. Darrangājavanisāvalī refers to an incident and maintains that Viśvasiṅha employed an ojhā for the treatment of one Brāhmana whose finger was chopped by the king.¹⁰ Herbal medicines, chemicals, tantra mantra (charms and incantations) were used for treatment of men and animals.¹¹ Treatises on the treatment of diseases of elephants are mentioned in the Hastividyaśāstra (written in 1734 A.D.) and of horses in the Chorā-Nidāna.¹²

'They (the Koch people) will', observed Ralph Fitch, 'Kill nothing. They have hospitals for sheeps, goats, dogs, cats, birds and for all other living creatures. When they be old and

lame, they keep them until they die'.¹³

The soil of Koch Bihar is of alluvial formation and has a large admixture of sand¹⁴ where crops like cotton, rice¹⁵ pulses viz. musuri, khesari etc., mustard seed, opium,¹⁶ tobacco¹⁷ and jute were grown. Opium was cultivated to so large an extent that it was evidently for contraband purposes.¹⁸

'The southern portion of Cooch Behar lying along the river Durlah, is a highly improved and fertile country; but to the north of the town of Bahar, the country has a vast miserable appearance, the land being low and marshy, interspersed with thick jungles and many nullahs. The vegetation is coarse, and the ground everywhere almost choked up with rank grass, reeds, and ferns. In 1784, the total territorial area was calculated at 1,302 square miles'.¹⁹

From the account of the Fathiyva-i-ibriyya, it is observed that the climate, land, vegetables and dwelling houses of the people of Koch Bihar were far superior to those of other places of India. Oranges, mangoes and black pepper were grown in large quantities.²⁰ Pine apples²¹ was also produced abundantly in the region. However, it is stated that its production at a later period was meagre in the Jalpaiguri region.²² But banyan, jack-fruit, mango, peepful and tamarind were produced. At a later period, Bamboos, Sissu, Palms etc. grew extensively all over the country and these constituted the main supply of fuel, besides being used in the building of

their houses and fences. Trees were scarcely found.²³

It is interesting to note here that the coins of Sikandar Shāh (1358 A.D.) bears the legend Chawlistān alias Kāmrūp.²⁴ The word Chawlistān denotes the agricultural lands for paddy cultivation. A place named Chawlier Kuthi found near the Kamatāpura fort also gives support to it. It is most likely that the Koch Kings followed the system of cultivation as existed in Assam from early days. The 'Zhum' system²⁵ which was popular among the tribals of Assam, was probably introduced in Koch Bihar.

As noticed earlier, the replacement of the Bhuyān chiefs by Visvasimha in the early 16th century from the westward thrust of the Ahom state paved the way for the emergence of a tribal state formation there. It has rightly been suggested that the movement from shifting to permanent cultivation, with or without the use of plough considered to be a determinant factor for the gradual process of state formations within a tribe.²⁶ This change, yielding a surplus production ensured for maintaining even a rudimentary state apparatus. The introduction of plough and digging stick cultures gave a new impetus to wet-rice (sali) cultivation at the cost of that of dry (shu/sas) and of the transplantation technique in preference to the broadcasting of seeds. This method of cultivation was, perhaps, becoming popular among the people and continued through centuries with no innovations.

It may, however, be pointed out here that a peculiar superstition among the people was associated with agriculture as in other things. New modes of cultivation or the rearing of new crops were regarded with fear as being injurious to health.²⁷

Manifold agricultural implements were in use. No contemporary evidence is, however, available in this regard. Mostly, these have been mentioned in later works.²⁸ It is possible that these implements were in vogue from long past as we do not notice any change in the cultivation system as mentioned above. Plough (Lāngal) and other implements are mentioned frequently.²⁹ From the Guru-āgita we learn that each village of Māgurmāri was provided with a hāl (plough) along with bullocks to cultivate the fields.³⁰ In the Kāmātā-Koch territory we do not come across dhaki, the husking implement of paddy and in its place wooden hataḥ or pestle (chaḡrain)^{was} observed.³¹

Hsien Tsang who visited Kāmarūpa in the 7th century A.D., noticed that water led from the river or from reservoirs flowed round the towns.³² Minhāj-i-Sirāj has also referred to such irrigation works of opening up the waterdykes all around at the time of the spring harvest in the kingdom of Kāmarūpa³³ in the 13th century A.D. Ralph Fitch who visited the Koch kingdom in the 16th century has remarked that the people could by damming the streams inundate the country above knee deep

as required, "so that ^{men nor horses} ~~even more horses~~ (could) pass".³⁴ These dams were thrown up across the upper courses of the hill streams and the stored-up water was drawn to the rice fields through a definite system of channels. The poppy fields which need constant watering was supplied by drawing water with a small wicker basket tied to the end of a small bamboo bundle, from reservoirs dug in the field for the purpose³⁵ and leading the water to the fields through bamboo or cane pipes. Low ridges (ā) of mud and grass was raised so as to hold the right quantity of rain water and to divide the rice fields into rectangular plots of about 20 by 30 feet. Excess water was thus let out of the demarcated fields. Although we come across such practice at a later date³⁶ it is interesting to note that during the reign of king Durlabhanārāyana (c 1330-50 A.D.), Candivara, the Kayastha Chief among others settled down on the bank of a stream called Langunāri, otherwise known as Paināguri as observed by Gait³⁷ and got the blessings of the people by erecting a bund^(i.e. embankment)³⁸ It is said that people were brought to that place by the king for settlement.³⁹ The Kacharis are said to have more accustomed to watering their rice fields from the small streams of the Duar areas and consequently better rice crops were obtained.⁴⁰ When Naranārāyana, the Koch king led an invasion against Assam, Khyrun and Dinagan, the main stream of the Brahmaputra river flowed via the Khārubhāñja (a circuitous channel shaped like a bangle) near Hājo. On his way back from Assam to Koch Bihar, Naranārāyana excavated a

canal to cause the river to flow straight (from the Rāksasi hills to the mouth of Baraliya river) to the west. Later on, this was re-excavated by the Ahom king when it was silted up.⁴¹

We get information from the Guzulīā about the condition of the people of Kāmata-Koch Kingdom. Dāmodaradeva who visited the kingdom of Koch Bihar during the period of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa spoke regarding the people's livelihood in the Koch capital in particular and those of the other places in general. The description of the city as supplied to us form a general outlook of the condition of the city dwellers. The king was benevolent. A large number of people belonging to different avocations used to get patronage from the king.⁴²

Gosānīnāgala also maintains that the people of the kingdom were very happy.⁴³

Ralph Fitch has also referred to the plenty of silk, cotton, musk goods etc. in Koch Bihar which testify to the economic prosperity. And the liberality shown to the animals further proves the atmosphere of peace and happiness that prevailed during the regime.⁴⁴ Cacella also mentioned of plentiful products of the country of Koch Bihar and of import from Patna, Rājmaḥal, and Gajda.⁴⁵ While describing the capital town of the Kāmata Koch kingdom, Shihāb-ud-din Falish says, "it (the capital) is adorned with beautiful houses and gardens in Badsahi style. In different parts of the palace there are

harems, reading rooms, bathing-places, solitary places and fountains. The roads and streets of the capitals are straight and both sides of them are adorned with planted rows of Nagasvar and Kashna trees".⁴⁵

The same writer further said, "if properly administered, the country might yield a revenue of 8 lacs of rupees. The Raja coins gold mohurs and Narains rupees. The zamindars of India esteem the Koch Bihar Rajahs, and believe that they trace their descent from Rajahs who reigned there before the arrival of the arrival of the Muhammedans in India".⁴⁷

Naranārāyaṇa is known for some benevolent deeds for the well-being of the people. He made Āli, Math, Pukur (reservoirs) etc. in various places and planted trees. Inns and wells were constructed.⁴⁸ Rūpamati Devi (sister of Prānanārāyaṇa) who was married to Kṣatriya king Pratāpamalla of the Malla dynasty of Nepal caused an inscription to be inscribed on the temple of Viṣṇu (dated 1649 A.D.). It supplies us the following information :

'There is the city of Bihar, the best of all capitals, full of gold and containing big elephants and beautiful women, like Amarāvati (the heavenly city). It was greater than the Kamalā of Viṣṇu. (It was the capital) of Naranārāyaṇa who conquered all enemies and was like Indra'. 'From him (Naranārāyaṇa) was born Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa and from him (Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa)

Vīranārāyaṇa. Rūpmati was his (Vīranārāyaṇa's) daughter and Prānanārāyaṇa was his son'.⁴⁹ Prānanārāyaṇa used to perform the ceremony of Tulāpuruṣa Dāna (weighing himself against coins of gold, silver etc., and had been distributing these among the poor) on the banks of the Ganges with great ceremonies.⁵⁰

Earthquakes took ^{place} in Kāmata-Koch kingdom place since long. In 1548 a terrible earthquake took place. During Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa's period also an earthquake occurred. In 1668 A.D. and 1669 A.D. famine and earthquake are said to have occurred. In almost all the cases in the course of the earthquakes, hot water, sand, ashes etc. were thrown out from the ground. However, no detailed account as to the loss arising out of these earthquakes is available.⁵¹ Traces of earthquake (in 1737 A.D.), famine (1176 B.S. i.e. Bengali San 1769 A.D.) have also been recorded during the period of Upendranārāyaṇa and Dhaṣṭyendra-nārāyaṇa (1765-70 and 1775-83).⁵² The famine of 1769 A.D. in Bengal better known as Chiyāttarer Manvantar) had also a bearing on the history of Koch Bihar (i.e. Kāmata Koch kingdom) causing loss of life and properties. Some scholar has referred to the scarcity of goods following the famine, although the detailed report is lacking.⁵³ But the Armenian and French Merchants started collecting grains from Kurssā a place on the southern boundary of Koch Bihar. The grains grown near Kurssā was normally exported to Rangpur. It is stated that Gross, the then Supervisor of Rangpur requested the king of Koch Bihar to continue the supply of grains.⁵⁴

Inspite of the reference to the affluence of the kingdom of Koch Bihar as noticed earlier the general condition of the people of Koch Bihar does not appear to be good in comparison with the inhabitants of the neighbouring Mughal country. The following observation of Turner who visited the country in 1783 is worth noticing. "The country has a most wretched appearance, and its inhabitants are a miserable and puny race. The lower ranks without scruple dispose of their children for slaves, to any purchaser and that too for a very trifling consideration; not yet, though in a traffic so unnatural, is the agency of a third person ever employed. Nothing is more common than to see a mother dress up her child, and bring it to market, with no other hope, no other view, than to enhance the price she may procure for it. Indeed the extreme poverty and wretchedness of these people will forcibly appear, when we recollect in these regions. The value of this can seldom amount to more than one penny per day, even allowing to make his meal of two pounds of boiled rice, with a due proportion of salt, oil, vegetables, fish and chilli".⁵⁵

He further pointed out to a peculiar system prevailed upon the society from remote antiquity. The custom was that if a Ryot or peasant owed a sum of money, he had to give up his wife as a pledge to the creditor in case he (the debtor) was unable to satisfy him in repayment. This possession of his wife was kept until the debt was discharged. If the wife of a debtor was not redeemed within one, two or three years and

if during this period a family came out as a consequence of her connection with the creditor, the half of which considered to be the property of the person with whom she lived, and half that of her real husband.⁵⁶ As Turner proceeded to Bhutan he saw that the northern part of Koch Bihar was practically uninhabited and in comparison with the southern area, there was more fallow land and jungle. Another factor which facilitated the disintegration of the administrative hierarchy was because of internal squabbles and strife during the last phase of Dhairyendranārāyana's reign. Nasir Deo Kumār Khagendra-nārāyana led one group while the other group was headed by Rājaguru Sarvaṇanda Gosvāī.⁵⁷ In such state of confusion and in absence of an organised government, the revenue officers resorted to evil practice by paying the revenue in advance by purchasing the future produce of the land. And after harvesting they used to sell the produced goods at twice or thrice the revenue paid in advance.⁵⁸

In addition, the coercion reached to a great height ✓ at the hands of the Sannyasis who in disguise of robbery, carried on plundering their debtors and exacted excessive repayments of loans or took forcible possession of mortgaged property. One of them, Nārāyana Gir(Giri) Mohant, became very famous and came close with Rājaguru Sarvaṇanda Gosvāī. He was offered due respect in the royal Darbar.⁵⁹ He was to act as a witness on

on behalf of the Mahārājā before the commissioners Mercer and Chauvet at the good grace of the Rājaguru. ✓

The officers of the East India Company were also ✓ engaged in illicit money-lending business in Koch Bihar. We come across an incident when Duncanson lent Rs. 14,901/- to the Mahārājā and got unsatisfactorily a return of Rs. 21,000/- after one year.⁶⁰ Besides, the sepoys were also indulging in lending money to the peasants and exacted their dues forcibly at the rate two or three annas interest per rupee. This made the people helpless and compelled many of them to leave the country.⁶¹ The rate of interest generally ranging from 72% to 360 per cent per annum which appeared to be too high to lead the borrowers to ruination.⁶² Oppression continued by Devi Sīnha who was appointed by the British as the Collector of Revenue of North Bengal. His assistant Hararna Sen was appointed in Koch Bihar⁶³ for collection of revenues. The peasants were in extreme poverty and were unable to pay the enhanced revenue. In spite of their sad plight, these collectors, by inhuman torture, collected more revenues than what it was used to have been collected during the later period of the Muslim rule. The officers under the Mahārājā of Koch Bihar were equally responsible for the poverty of the people. Another means of oppression through a class called 'farmer' was also carried on as mentioned in the report of Commissioners Douglas (1791 A.D.) and Ahmuty (1800 A.D.).⁶⁴ ✓

As a consequence of Devi Sīnha's oppression, the ✓

peasants who had so long remained as docile, revolted against Devī Simha and also against the British. ✓

The settlement of the whole of Koch Bihar (Dhalāishd) ✓ took place in 1766 A.D. In 1769, the boundary between Koch Bihar and the territory of the company was fixed. Some Tāluka of Gitaldaha, Batrisā-jāssi parganāhs were separated from Cākā-Kākinā and included in Koch Bihar.⁶⁵ It may be mentioned here that a large area of Cākā-Kākinā was given as Brahmottara (gift) land at the time of Medanārāyana.⁶⁶ ✓

LANDS

Ownership of Land :

The tradition belonging to the north Indian Kings that all lands were of the Crone, was also applicable in case of the Koch kings.⁶⁷ Not only this right was acknowledged over cultivated or waste lands, but also the king exercised his possession over all woods, forests, ferries, mines etc. After the death of Dhairyendranārāyana, a question arose on the ownership of lands and its share among the king, the Nāzir and the Devān of the Koch Bihar state. Khagendranārāyana, the Nāzir Deo submitted a representation to the minor Mahārājā Harendranārāyana. The Mahārānī who had to manage the affairs during the minority of the Rājāh answered, "The Mahārājā holds the divine right and he is the sovereign of his own country. There are no partners who share it with him (the Maharaja)".⁶⁸

It has also been suggested that 'the Raja of Koch Bihar is the owner of the soil, and stands much in the same relation to the jotedars as does a zaminder in lower Bengal to his rayats'.⁶⁹ Maharāja's ownership over land was again questioned when the Chowdhuries (Collector of revenue) of Bodā, Pātgrā and Pūrvabhāg, (the possession of which was granted to Dhairyaendrāyana by a Sunnad within Sarkar Koch Bihar) sought to become zamindars by filing a suit before the Collector of Rangpur against the Nāsir and the Maharāja of Koch Bihar by setting up a claim of title. But in 1778 A.D. the queries of Purling on the issue revealed that the Chowdhuries and the Nāsir were merely officers of the three Caklās and the real owner was the king himself.⁷⁰

The King Naranārāyana introduced the poā pāik system (a rule counting four men as one Poā Pāik)⁷¹ which was in vogue in Assam.⁷² Previously, in Assam it was four men that constituted one Poā Pāik, but due to famine which caused great loss of manpower, led the inevitable change of structure formation of the 'Poā Pāik' by decreasing it to a number of three pāiks forming a Got. This pāik system in Assam became popular. One member of each Got was obliged to render service to the state in rotation. During his absence from home, the other members of the Got were required to cultivate his land in order to make both ends meet and procure the articles of daily use.⁷³ Each Pāik was allowed to have two Pugas (nearly three acres) of rice land free of rent in return to his manual

labour.⁷⁴ In Koch Bihar, however, King Naranārāyana, in order to maintain a large army and fleet had to collect regular levies from Chieftains and Jāigirdārs. Instead of paying the soldiers, a jāigir consisting of three puras (about 12 bighas) was fixed as remuneration for each soldier.⁷⁵ These Jāigir were rent-free and were held by the grantee without paying any rent.⁷⁶ But the service rendered by them during their tenure was considered as their return to the state obtained from the disposition of lands.⁷⁷ We know from Darrang Rajyamāvali that during the Ahom invasion king Naranārāyana required manual service from the Paiks of four men a 'got'.⁷⁸ Thus the adult male population owed the obligation of periodic service to the state. The utilization of the manpower pool was organised by the King with the help of a hierarchy of officers. The latter used to exploit a portion of the mobilised labour for their private gains. The ruler had been offering land grants to Brahmins, temples and religious institutions where large private feudal properties were granted to them. As such, a good number of Paiks were entrusted with the works of temporal and spiritual ^{loads,} being separated from state's jurisdiction. In this process, labour-rent could be directly procured from the Paiks. This type of properties also existed in the Koch Kingdom and this practice was later on preserved by the Mughals.⁷⁹

However, details of the militia system in the Koch territory are not available. But we have already noticed that

the system of exacting compulsory militia service, though in a simpler manner was prevalent in Koch Bihar. The quasi-feudal nature of the system as existed in the Koch territory has perhaps been rightly pointed out that it had a striking resemblance to similar system in mediaeval South East Asia.⁸⁰

Land Tenures

From early times the land appeared to have been divided into two kinds : (1) revenue-paying, and (2) rent-free.⁸¹ Persons holding the first kind of land had to pay revenue to the state. The holders of rent-free land, on the other hand, were private individuals who obtained them for their purposes. They did not pay any taxes for such lands. The different types of rent-free estates classified⁸² are as follows :

- (1) Brahmottara - Land grants to Brāhmanas; (2) Devottara - Land allotted to the performance of religious rites;
- (3) Pīrnal - Lands granted to Muslims Pīrs and Saints;
- (4) Lākhāri - reward for good services to the state;
- (5) Porhātā - to maintain the expenditures for the royal families.

Various instances of land grants have been recorded. It is said that Durlabhanārāyana, the ruler of Kamatāpura settled seven families of Brāhmanas and Kāyasthas on the frontier (near Languānti) as warden of the marches, and gave them lands and slaves.⁸³ In gossānīangala we come across such lands for

the performance of religious rites.⁸⁴ It may also be mentioned that Visvasimha defeated the Kāyastha Bhuyāns during the course of his consolidation of power. And their influence being waned completely, Kavindrapātra, the minister of Naranārāyana, caused the induction of 14 Kāyastha families from Mithila, Jessore and places of Bengal. In this way king Naranārāyana encouraged the new settlements of the Kāyasthas in his kingdom.⁸⁵

On receipt of an order from king Naranārāyana, his brother Sukladhwaja, as we have seen while discussing the impact of the Bhuyān in the chapter on Society, inscribed on a copper plate, the pledge which the king gave to 14 Bhuyāns in order to settle them on the bank of the river Brahmaputra by making land grants. On the other side, the Bhuyāns also assured the king that they would settle at that place permanently. The promises of both the parties were embodied in a document.⁸⁶ Sankaradeva also got possession over Ragneta Mahal from the king Naranārāyana.⁸⁷ Land grants were made available even to the people of various classes such as, potters, Barbars, washerman, goldsmith at a period when the faith propounded by Dāmodaradeva was ^{gaining} going ground in Koch Bihār.⁸⁸ Prānārāyana, the Koch King had patronised one Brāhmana named Sīromonī Bhattacharyya by land grants and the copy of the said deed of gift has been reproduced in the A History of Koch Behar.⁸⁹ He also granted lands for the

worship of Bodesvari image established in Bhitargarh in the district of Jalpaiguri).⁹⁰ It may be mentioned in this connection that the king was credited to have established the images of Chaturbhujā in Madhupura, Madanmohana in Srirampura, Chaturbhujā in Karalkuta, Benamālī in Benamālīpura and Modangopāla in Dāmodarpura. It is said that some images were discovered when the tank at Bānesvara was excavated. The present temple of Kāmatesvari Gosānī in Kāmatapura (Gosānīmārī) was constructed by him in Śaka 1537 (1665 A.D.) and as we know it from the inscription engraved on the temple.⁹¹

Besides, another type of land grant named Jāigir was prevalent in those days particularly among the slaves and attendants. This class of people were engaged in various activities connected with the royal palace. The right over such land was neither hereditary nor transferable. It may, however, be stated that this Jāigir right took the shape of 'Cakrān' of Bengal.⁹² This system came down to Koch Bihar from the period of Naranāyana who received a few Morāngī slaves from the Morāngī Rājā in connection with a marriage.⁹³ These slaves were given the Tāluka in Māthābhāng, Kodālkseti, Bhogmārā etc. They acquired lands in return to their services to the palace. The Jāigirdāri right was confiscated if they failed to perform the work entrusted to them. The total number of Jāigirdārs were 974.⁹⁴

Sometimes persons having close relation with the royal families managed to secure large quantities of rent-free

lands. For example, Sarvānanda Gosvami, the royal priest and Kāsināth Lahiri, the Khāsnavis were among others who secured large quantities of rent-free Jāgir Taluka.⁹⁵

It appears that the Revenue-paying Lands were again classified under Māl, Devottara and Khāngi. The first was considered for state revenue; the second for religious purposes; and the third was set apart for the maintenance of the Mahārāja's household. The person paying revenues immediately to the state were called jotedars who held numerous jotes, and were strikingly similar to those of the zamindars and talukdars of British India paying revenues in the same manner direct to the Government. A jote was heritable and transferable.⁹⁶ The jotes were of two kinds : Mokṛṣi and Sarasṣi. The rent of the farmer was settled in perpetuity and could not be enhanced. The lease of Sarasṣi jote, Wāṣ was on the other hand, only temporary, granted for a fixed number of years, after Wāṣ which the tenure was open for re-settlement.⁹⁷ The Mokṛṣi lands, however, were of two types. In some deeds, the Rājās had entered special clause giving hereditary rights and in others no such clause was inserted. In later form, a heir could not claim the right over land in the event of death of his father.⁹⁸ For obvious reasons this system was discontinued and it led Douglas in 1790 to introduce the ijāzāṣi system of collection. And this system too could not achieve any substantial success.⁹⁹

Revenue Administration and Taxes

The land revenue administration as adopted by the Koch rulers made them enable to procure more produces out of which the heavy administrative machinery was fed. It may be mentioned that the royal revenue consisted of a ^{proportion} ~~production~~ of the produce of the land.¹⁰⁰ It has been suggested that Visvasinha perhaps retained and strengthened the Muslim type of revenue administration. He might have thought that the indigenous system of revenue collection had been defective causing, therefore, the loss of revenue.¹⁰¹ Visvasinha is said to have allotted lands called Mahals and Chamus to his officials. These two types of lands yielding revenues were similar to those of the Hazari-Malghujary class of lands in the Muslim Kingdom.¹⁰²

It may be mentioned here that in 1773, the land revenue of Koch Bihar as shown in the Husthood prepared by Purling amounted to Narsini Rs. 1, 99, 120.¹⁰³

Purling made the Husthood or account of revenue in 1773 A.D. It showed that payment of revenues could be made in two ways. One was assal or original rent, and the other was shresh, or additional cesses.¹⁰⁴ It seems that in previous times land which was settled annually was not generally measured. Assessment thereof did not follow any fixed rates.

Cowries were current as money even upto the middle of the 19th century. This is a tradition as recorded in History of Cooh Behar that King Khantesvara (Nilānvara) advised his successor to realise only a very few cowries as revenue for each plough and therefore an inscription was caused to be engraved on a stone.¹⁰⁶

It is interesting to note that Gadadhara Sinha (1681-1696) the king of Assam brought many surveyors (Āmin) from Koch Bihar and Bengal to engage them in working out the actual amount of land within the Kingdom.¹⁰⁶ Modanārāyana (1665-1680 A.D.), the Koch King is said to have ordered for a general survey of lands occupied by his subjects in 165 Rājasaka (1674 A.D.)¹⁰⁷

The assessment of land as was undertaken under the Koch rulers do not seem to have based on any uniform pattern.¹⁰⁸ However, H.N.Chowdhury has mentioned three categories of rates as prevalent in Koch Bihar State.¹⁰⁹ These are (1) Rs. 20/- for a Bigh of first class land, (2) Rs. 15/- of second class land; and (3) Rs. 10/- of third class. A Bigh was, however, equal to about 13 bighās of standard measurement. The rate per bighā of land varied thus : Rs. 1-8-3 for first class land, Rs. 1-2-6 for second class and 12 annas and 3 pies for third class land. The average of the above three rates was Rs. 1-2-4. These rates had hardly meaningful since no regular assesment of land was arranged.¹¹⁰ The measurement of land as it is noticed was done in the Khās mahals and in new settlements under the crude Khāshrah or old native system. Compass was not in use at that

period. Generally, measurement was done by a rope on a rod of a fixed lines of measurement in gaj or 2 ft. in length.¹¹¹ However, this was not applied to Māl or Devottara lands.

Crafts and Industries ✓

✓ The Crafts industry developed in the state of Koch ✓ Bihar. References have already been made to persons of various vocations who were engaged in weaving, spinning, gold washing, making earthen materials and of workers in Bamboo or wooden substances. It may be noted in this connection that in 1564 A.D. many Koch artisans were sent to ^{Ahom King} Assam along with the Ahom hostages who were released by Naranārāyana. Some of the artisans were skilled in the art of making images of Durgā and other Hindu deities.¹¹² It is said that silk industry flourished ✓ at Barnagara under the patronage of king Naranārāyana. While sending the envoys to the court of Khorā Rājā, the Ahom king, King Naranārāyana sent, inter alia, five beautiful silk sarees manufactured in Barnagara industry.¹¹³ A ✓ good number of people ✓ might have settled around Barnagara for their livelihood. Silk varieties were classed as endi, and mekli cloth. "The endi", as Hunter observed, "is a coarse silk made of the produce of silk worms fed on the Castor-oil plant (Ricinus communis), called by the natives egi". Again, he says that "the mekli is a coarse ✓ cloth made of jute, and used for screens, bedding etc.; it takes

its name from the Sub-Divisional town of Mekhliganj, where it is largely produced.¹¹⁴ However, it is possible that the place Mekhliganj might have taken its name from a variety of jute called Mekhli which, perhaps, constituted the chief commodity of trading, there in the Gañj or Hāt (i.e. market place). It has been noticed by Campbell that mekhalā cloth made of thread of jute in different colours were in great demand among the ladies of Koch Bihar.¹¹⁵

Cotton

Cotton cloth was the chief article of common use. It has been referred to above that Cotton as cash crop was produced abundantly in Koch Bihar. From the Darrang Rāja Vaisāvalī we learn that there was a gathering of eighteen princes of royal blood arranged under the order of King Viśvasimha for the purpose of selecting the next incumbent after him on the throne of Kūmātā-Koch kingdom. For this, eighteen packets containing eighteen separate articles one each were placed before them and everybody was asked to pick up one each from the said choices. It was provided that one who would select the packet containing earth would become the next king. In this context, one of the aspirants for the throne named Meghanārāyaṇa is said to have picked up cotton (Kārpāsa).¹¹⁶ Previously, preference was given to those brides who were adept in weaving and spinning prior to their marriages.¹¹⁷ In eastern

Indian states like Assam and Manipur this practice still seems to be in vogue.¹¹⁸ Śankaradeva under the patronage of King Naranārāyana started a cotton industry at Tantikuchi (Barpeta) and employed a large number of weavers there.¹¹⁹ They earned reputation for manufacturing the famous Vr̄ndāvanī Vastra which was presented to Naranārāyana.¹²⁰ They used to call it thus because the weavers made an attempt to depict the different incidents of the life of Kṛṣṇa (Kṛṣṇa-līlā). The technique involved in it, as said by Śankaradeva was so peculiar that threads were required to be arranged part by part in order to have drawn the aforesaid pictures.¹²¹ Śukladhaja (alias Cīlārāi) is also said to have started a cotton industry where a weaver named Gopāla was employed.¹²²

Boat-Building

Boat-Building industry seems to have flourished ✓ in the Kāmatā-Koch kingdom in view of the constant naval transport service and meeting the domestic needs of the people. ✓ Besides, Naranārāyana also used to maintain a naval force at his command.¹²³ It may be noted here that Boat-building industries developed in Bengal in the mediæval period and necessary woods were collected from trees such as Kānthāl, Piyāl, Shāl, Gāmbhārī, Tamāl etc. ✓ The Jukti-Kalpataṛu, a sanskrit composition refers to the boat-building industries.

R.C.Majumder stated that a large number of carpenters settled round the extensive area of Dacca in the 17th century. ¹²⁴

Other Crafts

The art of pottery developed in Koch Bihar since early times under the patronage of successive Koch Kings. Lands, as we have already noted were granted to them for their subsistence. Again, it has already been noticed that a few potters were sent to the Ahom Kingdom. The Koch rulers were also patrons of art and architecture. It is said that King Prasenārāyana brought some masons from Delhi to establish the Jalpesvara temple. The remnants of a few brick-made buildings near the Khen capital at Kāmātapura led Hamilton to comment that these building-structure followed the style of Muhammadan workmanship. ¹²⁵ Mention has earlier been made about the construction of Kāmākhya temple at Nilācala; Gosānimāri temple at Kāmātapura, Bāhesvara temple near present Koch Bihar town, etc. which were established under the patronage of the Koch rulers. It may be mentioned that Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.), the Ahom king brought Śrī Ghanasayana, an architect who lived in Koch Bihar and during the latter's stay at Assam many magnificent buildings were erected by him at Sibsagar town and Carai Deo. ¹²⁶

Trade, Commerce and Currency

Stephen Casella mentioned about Internal markets (bāsārs) which he found at Koch capital while he paid a visit there during the reign of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa. He also said that every produce of the state was brought to the market for sale. That there was a brisk trade between Behar (Koch Bihar) with Patna, Rājmaḥal and Gouga, has been well documented in his account.¹²⁷ Dāmodaradeva informs us about the good condition of the markets (Hāts) in the Kāmata Koch kingdom and mentions of the commodities which were brought for sale such as curd, milk, oil, salt, turmeric, flowers, ghee, honey, confectioners etc.¹²⁸

Reference has been made particularly to two Hats viz. Nagulhāt and DWāgnūie from which Tobacco, opium, mustard seeds were exported by boat to Murshidabad and Basca.¹²⁹ Market sector was in growing stage. Exchange operations were largely conducted on both barter and cowrie currency terms. We have seen above the use of cowrie as medium of exchange. The Kathā-Guru-Carita supplies us with an interesting story of one Bhavānanda Kalitā (b. circa 1495 A.D.), a big merchant who lost all moveable properties along with his his family in a boat-wreck while migrating to a new village. However, he made a small fortune of 640 cowries (normally equal to half-a-rupee) by assisting a betel-leaf vendor in close trade association.

Within a few years he got back his pecuniary position and took to riverine trade. He made Koch Bihar as sheet anchor of his trade which carried on with the men procured from the Gāro Hills, Bhutan, Mughal Bengal and the Ahom Kingdom. He was allowed to trade all over the Koch kingdom, being immuned from custom taxes.¹³⁰

It is noticed that cowries played an important role in business transactions. It is also known that the Koch Kings had been issuing coins at the time of their accessions to the throne, in gold, silver and sometimes in copper as well. Gold and silver coins were, however, not as much popular in the petty trade section as it could have been in the circle of big merchants. It was, perhaps, for this reason cowries and possibly copper coins continued to be the media of exchange for a considerable period. Thus, it is presumed that alongside the coins mostly used in urban or royal circles the basic structure of barter and cowrie economy ^{remained unchanged} in village level where the exchange was made on a petty level catering to the needs of small traders. Trade activities were in force in various parts of the country.

Some¹³¹ gave a list of places where trade activities were carried on. This continued upto the first quarter of the 19th century. Ralph Fitch who arrived at Koch Bihar in 1583 A.D. also mentioned of a port called Gāshazata in the Kāmata-Koch kingdom. But its exact location is still to be determined.¹³² He also wrote about Koch Kingdom's

trade relation with the distant lands of Tibet, China, Tārtāry and Muscoviā. ¹³³ Among the items of trade, Fitch mentioned of silk, musks, blankets, turquoise (agate) pepper, and "Safron of Persia". Fitch did not enter the Bhutan hills but his description evidently proves that there was the commercial importance of the route from Tashilhāpo through the Paro Penlop's territory to Buxā and Gāurcha north of Rangpur. The Bhutās came to the plains through different pūars (pass). These were situated at the borders of the Koch country of Laksmīnārāyana. ¹³⁴

Markham considers this description as a "correct account of the intercourse which then prevailed between India and Tibet through the passes of Bhutan and through Nepal". ¹³⁵

Regarding Āio (Hāio) which situated to the east of the river Sankosa, Cacella has highly appreciated it (Āio), being the important trade mart where trade routes through Manas Valley and Towāng met together.

In the 17th century the navigability of the Tersā, which flows past the town of Koch Bihar, has been emphasised by ~~the~~ H.N. Chowdhury. Both Hājo and Koch Bihar were undoubtedly the focal points of Bhutan trade with plains. ¹³⁶ The river route from Goālpārā was down the Brahmaputra via Jonnāi from Jamālpara, connecting at a short distance with the Pabna river, a navigable branch of the Ganges. ¹³⁷ It is quite plausible that this river-route was also utilised

by the Koch people. Because river Torsa which flowed along the capital side, ultimately fell into the Brahmaputra.

During the reign period of Naranaṛāyana, the people were said to have habituated to trade and various commodities were exchanged with other parts of Bengal via the Brahmaputra river. 138

There were a few inland roads which were important in the context of the flourishing trade in those days. The old road of Nilāvara which joins Koch Bihar with Rajshahi via Mogulhat, Rangpur, Bogra and Natore passes through several Taluks of Kismat Jālgīr paigband, Lāta Dhāpur land Manbhās. 139

In different Vaisāvalis, we find records of the construction of one road by Gohān Kamal Āli (the road of Gohān Kamal, son of Viśvasimha) was one of the greatest public work of the Mahārāja Naranaṛāyana. 140 It was Pranaṛāyana who constructed the roads and bridges in various parts of his kingdom. 141

S.C.Ghosal supplies us with the information that there were three (according to another view four) routes through Morung, Bākdūr and Rāngāsāti respectively into the kingdom of Kamatā-Koch Bihar. 142

It is interesting to note that there were markets for slave trades where the slaves were brought by the parents

of poor families. ¹⁴³

By the time of transference of the Dewani (1765) Bhutan's trade in the plains was extended to Rangpur. Further, the Bhutanese had gained control of large parts of the western duars which traditionally belonged to Koch Chieftains and made a bid to conquer Koch Bihar. The Bhutanese king Desi Sidariva (Bogle's Deb Yudhur) kept Mahārāja Dhairyendrānārāyana of Koch Bihar in captivity at Buxā in 1770. The above factors led to the outbreak of the First Bhutanese war (1771-74) and collision between the Bhutanese and the English. ¹⁴⁴

Sidariva tried to exercise Bhutan's control of the western Duars, ensuring its hold over Koch Bihar. The Bhutan king was eager to improve the scale of Bhutan-Rangpur trade. However, his ambition could not be materialised on account of the conclusion of Anglo-Koch Bihar treaty of 1772.

It is however interesting to note in this connection that Mercer and Chauvet who were appointed as special Commissioners by the British after the conclusion of the Anglo-Koch Bihar Treaty supplies us with some valuable information about the nature of the export and import of various commodities of the kingdom as prevalent from early times. ¹⁴⁵

Notes and References

- 1 A.Guha, Medieval North East India: Polity, Society and Economy, 1200-1750, Occasional Paper No.19, p.14.
- 2 Gait, A History of Assam, p.270.
- 3 N.C.Sharma (ed.) Darrang Rājavāṁśāvalī, p.9.
- 4 S.C.Goswami (ed.), Sri Sri Deva Dāmodara Deva Carita, p.68.

Cf. Dāsagane Kṛsi karma karante thākey |

Krisir dhānya Teyo dugun pābaya |

Verse 267.

We have noted earlier that Śaṅkaradeva's household was said to have had a number of slaves and bondsmen.

- 5 Ibid., p.67.
- 6 N.N.Paul (ed.), Gosāṁśāvalī, pp.13-14.
- 7 Kautilya wrote that an enclosure (for pasturage) at a distance of 100 dhanus (400 cubits) should be made around a village -
B.K.Barua, A Cultural History of Assam, p.78.
We know from Campbell (A Comprehensive Archaeological, Biographical and Pictorial History of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, Vol.I; Chapter - Glimpses of Bengal, ^{tr. of the portion on Cooch Behar by N.N. Paul, Bengali, Calcutta, 1979, p.6} that Golāraṅghuṁi (pasture) was kept reserved by state order.
- 8 N.N.Paul (ed.), Gosāṁśāvalī, pp.13-14
~~tr. of the portion on Cooch Behar~~
by N.N.Paul in Bengali, Calcutta, 1979, p.6.
- 9 Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal, Vol.X, p.385.
- 10 Hunter N.C.Sharma (ed.), op.cit., p.55.

- 11 N.K.Basu, Assam in the Ahom Age, p. 253.
- 12 S.C.Ghosal, A History of Coosh Behar, pp.68-69.
- 13 J.Horton Ryley, Ralph Fitch, England's pioneer to India and Burma, London, 1899,
His Narrative, Second part, p.111.
- 14 H.N.Chowdhary, The Coosh Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement, p.158.
- 15 Damodaradeva said in reply to a query of Shankaradeva that the expected production as estimated by the former was thirty maunds of paddy, S.C.Goswami, op.cit., p.67.
- 16 The cultivation of opium is said to have been introduced in Assam in the reign of Lakshmi Sinha at about 1770 A.D. Provincial Gazetteers of Assam, Compiled by Authority, New Delhi, Reprint, 1983, p.81.

That opium was cultivated in Koch Bihar even in the 16th century is attested by the following statement :

"In the 16th century, opium is mentioned by Pyres (1516) as a production of the kingdom of coss (Kuch Behar) in Bengal and of Malwa".

Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol.XX, Eleventh Edition, p.130.

- 17 Walter Hamilton, A Geographical, Statistical And Historical Description of Hindostan and the adjacent countries, Vol.I, New Delhi, 1971, (First Indian Reprint), 28.

According to Hamilton,

"It appears from a proclamation of the Emperor Jehangir, mentioned by that prince in his own memoir, that it was introduced by European into India, either in his own reign (the beginning of the 17th Century) or during that of his father Akbar".

18 Ibid., p. 215.

19 Loc. cit.

20 Blochmann, J.A.S.B., Vol. 41, Nos. 1-4, 1872, p. 65.

21 S. Turner, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

It is observed that pine apple was introduced in Koch Bihar during the reign of Aurangzeb when Mirgumla led an invasion into this kingdom. He along with the vast army had to detail a considerable time in this neighbourhood and received pine apple from Kabul and Kashmir as a part of supply.

It is thus stated that in absence of grain market in Koch Bihar, Mirgumla's troops had to face the food problem in the 1660s.

22 J. D. Hooker, The Himalayan Journal, Vol. 2, 1849, p. 12.

23 Hunter, op. cit., p. 383.

24 Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum,
Vol. II, p. 152 & Part II plate II No. 38.

25 S. L. Barua, Agriculture in Assam in the Ahom Age,
J.A.R.S., Vol. XV, 1978-80, p. 62.

In this system the forests and jungles were reclaimed by fire before rains. And then seeds were sowed in those areas. In this way, crops were produced. This system, however, has been referred to in many folk literatures of Assam.

26 A. Guha, op. cit., pp. 2, 4.

- 27 H.N.Chowdhury, op.cit., p. 158; N.N.Paul (ed.), op.cit., p. 5.
- 28 C.Sanyal, op.cit., p. 55; Hunter, op.cit., p. 335;
H.N.Chowdhury, op.cit., p. 160.
- 29 A.C.Campbel, op.cit., p. 5. Tr. by N.N.Paul.
- 30 H.N.Dutta Barua, ed., Gurucarita, Nalbari, 1955, p. 19.
(Cf. Codda sata dhān pāche tāsānbāk dila |
Eko vāso āni sevāke jogāilā ||
Verse 100)
- 31 N.C.Chowdhury (ed.) Rāikat Vānsā O Tāhāder Rāiver
Sāṅkṣipta Vivaraṅ, (Bengali), Jalpaiguri, 3rd ed./1983,
p. 9.
- 32 S.Beal, Travels of Hsuen-Tsang,
New Ed. Cal. 1958, p. 404.
- 33 Minhāj-i-Sirāj, Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri, Eng. tr. by Major Revert, Vol. II, London, 1821, Reprint, New Delhi, 1970, p. 560.
K.L.Barua, Early History of Kamarupa,
p. 151, Second Ed. Gauhati, 1966.
- 34 Horton Hyley, op.cit., p. 111; K.L.Barua, op.cit., p. 202;
N.C.Chowdhury (ed.), Rāikat Vānsā O Tāhāder Rāiver
Sāṅkṣipta Vivaraṅ, Jalpaiguri, 1983, p. 9.
- 35 William Robinson, A Descriptive Account of Assam,
pp. 220-221, 1861, Delhi, Reprinted, 1975, pp. 220-221
- 36 B.Hamilton, J.A.S.B., p. 65, 1838, p. 65
- 37 Gait, op.cit., p. 41.
- 38 H.N.Dutta Barua (ed.), op.cit., p. 19; U.Lekharu (ed.),
Kathā Guru Carita, 1954, pp. 14ff.

39 H.N. Dutta Barua, (ed.), op.cit., p. 19.

(Cf. Lenguāmāriā nāme bil ek āche |

Bicāri phurante sabē dekhilanta pāche ||

Bāta kāti tāhār tīrat vāsā dilā |

Tār matsya sūve bhojan karilā || (verse, 96)

40 Robinson, op.cit., p. 221.

41 Ghosal, op.cit., p. 142.

42 K.C. Pathak (ed.), op.cit., p. 111.

43 N.N. Paul (ed.), Gosārimāngala, pp. 3 & 74.

(Cf. "Ei rājye jato lok sukhi sarvajan"

"Anandita sarvalok hailek sukhi

Rāurājya samarājya nahi keho sukhi".)

44 Horton Ryley, op.cit., p. 111.

45 C. Wessels, op.cit., p. 128.

46 quoted in S.C. Ghosal's op.cit., p. 206.

47 Blochmann, op.cit., p. 66.

48 N.C. Sharma (ed.), op.cit., p. 114.

49 S.C. Ghosal, op.cit., p. 201.

50 Ibid., p. 204.

51 Ghosal, op.cit., pp. 167, 190 & 207.

52 Ibid., p. 248.

53 Loc. cit.

54 Loc. cit.

55 S. Turner, An account of an Embassy to the Court
of Teshoo Lama in Tibet, p-11,

New Delhi, 1971(Reprinted), P 11

Walter Hamilton also refers to the custom prevalent among the lower classes to dispose of their children for slaves without scruple and he gives hint to the extreme poverty of the people in this region.

W. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 215.

56 Turner, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

57 Ghosal, op. cit., p. 279.

58 Mercer and Chauvet's Report on Cooch Behar (i. e. The Cooch
Behar Select Records, Vol. II, 1788, Cooch Behar Press,
1868, p. 74.

59 Ghosal, op. cit., p. 280.

60 Loc. cit.

However, in his letter dated 21st August, 1788 A.D. Capt. Duncanson denied the receipt of this amount.

61 Biswanath Das (ed.), Rājopākhyāna, p. 81, 1st edition, 1965, P 81

62 The Cooch Behar Select Records, Vol. I, p. 29.

63 A.N. Chandra, op. cit., p. 123.

"His (Devisinha's) oppressions and also the actions of Hastings were censured in unequivocal terms by Edmund Burke and he stated : "I charge him (Hastings) with having committed to the management of Devi Singh three great

Provinces; and thereby, with having wasted the country, ruined the landed interest, cruelly harassed the peasants, burnt their houses, seized their crops, tortured and degraded their persons and destroyed the honour of the whole female race of the country" - quoted in the above book, p. 163; Patterson, who in his judgement reported about the oppression of Devi ^{Simha} Singh in Rangpur and Dinajpur, had to meet with evil fate ^{at the hands of} by the Governor General Warren Hastings -

Nd. Abu Talib, Majnu Saha (Bengali), pp. 53-54, Dacca, 1980.

64 Ghosal, op.cit., p. 281.

65 Banwari Chandra Chaudhury, Sambhu Vasisa Carita, p. 12.

66 Cf. The land grants of the Mahārājā Modanārāyana

See Ghosal, op.cit., p. 213 fn.

67 Gait, op.cit., p. 270.

68 Mercer and Chauvet, op.cit., p. 19.

69 Hunter, op.cit., p. 338.

70 Mercer and Chauvet's Report, Vol. II, pp. 90, 97, 102.

71 N.H. Paul (ed.), op.cit., p. 4.

72 S.K. Bhuyan (ed.), Assam Burāñi by Harkanta Barua

Sadaramin, Gauhati, 1962, p. 120.

73 Gait, op.cit., p. 249.

74 Ibid., p. 250.

75 Ghosal, op.cit., p. 157.

76 N.H. Paul (ed.), op.cit., p. 4.

77 H.N. Chowdhury, op. cit., p. 242.

78 N.C. Sharma, op. cit., p. 64.

(Cf. Pāṇḍu Rājā Mohalā karilā |

Rāvana Lakṣa pañcīśa hājorok pailā ||

Cari poā dare got ekek pākar |

Naba sakhiāḥ suniok ātapar || Verse. 315)

79 A. Guha, op. cit., p. 10.

80 Virginia Thompson, Thailand : the New Siam (New York, 1941), pp. 292 ff.

81 H.N. Chowdhury, op. cit., p. 441;

Again, H.N. Chowdhury, The Chakrajat Estates, Cooch Behar, 1902, p. 90.

82 H.N. Chowdhury, The Cooch Behar Estate and its Land Revenue Settlement, p. 541.

83 H.N. Dutta Barua (ed.), Guru Garita, pp. 18-19;
Gait, op. cit., p. 41.

84 N.N. Paul (ed.), Gosānīmāngala, p. 74.

85 N.N. Vasu, op. cit., Vol. II, pp. 167-68.

86 Durgādās, op. cit., quoted in N.N. Vasu's op. cit., p. 69.

87 H.N. Dutta Barua (ed.), op. cit., p. 781

S.C. Gosvami (ed.), op. cit., p. 66.

88 K.C. Pathak (ed.), Gurulīlā, p. 113, Barpetā, 1932.

89 Ghosal, op. cit., p. 205.

90 Loc. cit.

91 Ibid., p. 206.

92 H.N. Chowdhury, op. cit., p. 546.

93 Loc.cit.

94 Loc.cit. Mostly they used to show negligence to agriculture and enjoy more lands than actually entitled. They introduced farmers who acted as intermediaries. In 1870, an attempt was made to survey the actual amount of lands within the kingdom. Strange enough, the jāigirdārs abandoned their identities and wanted to pose them as rāyats with lands as usually allotted to the latter.

Consequently, the number as shown above came down to 359.

95 S. Mukherjee, Koch Biharar Bhūmi rāisava - Unabinnā Satābdī, published in Koch Bihar Sahitya Sabha Patrika, (a Bengali journal) (ed.), Gopesh Chandra Dutta, Cooch Behar, 1380 B.S. p. 34.

The records of the East India Company refers to as many as 22 Taluks held by Gosvami such as Dhuner Khātā, Boalāri, Magica, Pācherā, Sinjiani, Petlākuthi, Sitalkhuchi, Barbhita. Later on, his descendants had the privilege to enjoy right over only two Taluks.

96 H.N. Chowdhury, op.cit., p. 509.

97 H.N. Chowdhury, Chaklajat Estates, p. 172.

98 Hunter, op.cit., p. 391.

99 H.N. Chowdhury, The Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement, pp. 443-44.

100 S.C. Ghosal, op.cit., p. 118.

101 Mohini Mohan Saikia, Assam-Muslim Relation and its Cultural Significance, Golaghat, Assam, 1978, p. 162.

- 102 Ibid., p. 193.
- 103 H.N.Chowdhury, op.cit., p. 272.
- 104 For detailed statement of the Hustbood as prepared by Purling in 1773 A.D.
See Ghosal, op.cit., pp. 261-62.
- 105 However, no such inscription of Nilgvara has so far been found. Ghosal, op.cit., p. 70.
- 106 Ibid., p. 225.
- 107 Ibid., p. 213.
- 108 The Cooh Behar Select Records, Vol. I, Para 7, p. 47.
- 109 H.N.Chowdhury, op.cit., p. 549.
- 110 Loc.cit.
- 111 Ibid., p. 457.

It may be mentioned here that according to the British lineal measure 3 ft. is equal to one yard (i.e. two cubits or one gai)

"The area used to be computed in bishes, dones and kalis according to the following table :

5 (5 x 1) sq. gojes	= 1 Gandā or 1 Dhur
100 (10 x 10) sq. gojes	= 20 Gandās = 1 kālī or 16 Dhurs.
16 Kālīs	= 1 Done or 12 Khottās and 16 Dhurs
20 Dones	= 1 Bish or 12 Bighās and 16 Khottās
16 Bish	= 1 Gram or 204 Bighās and 16 Khottās

Chakrajat Estates, p. 153.

Loc.cit., Also H.N.Chowdhury, Chakrajat Estates, p. 153.

112 Gait, op.cit., p.103; N.C.Sharma (ed.), op.cit., p.18 - Artisans were found to be mainly engaged in construction of the Maths and temples in various parts of the country.

113 S.K.Bhuyan, Weaving in Assam, published in The Modern Review, 1948, p.465.

114 Hunter, op.cit., p.397.

115 A.C.Campbell, op.cit., /tr.by N.N.Paul in Bengali, Calcutta, 1979, p.6.

Earlier F.Hamilton^{has} mentioned that meghalā was the original female dress of Kāmarūpa and Koch of Rangpur and this region, An Account of Assam, 1840, ed. by S.K.Bhuyan, Gauhati, 1940, p.61.

116 N.C.Sharma (ed.), op.cit., p.52.

117 H.N.Chowdhury, op.cit., p.154.

118 Gait, op.cit., pp.271-72.

119 M.Neog (ed.), Bardoloi Gurucakts, p.180, Gauhati, (Reprinted), 1980.

120 S.C.Goswami (ed.), op.cit., p.66.

{Cf. Vṛndāvanī vasanare kām karāllā |

Siovastra nirmi pāchāṅhrpatik dilā | ॥ १ ॥

121 (Cf. Vṛndāvana kṛṣṇalīlā Vastre ōka aita |

Sankare bulila bahu ayojan lage |

Vastrat tulite suto lage bhāge bhāge || V.360 ||

H.N.Dutta Barua, op.cit., p.780.

- 122 M. Neog (ed.), op.cit., p. 158.
- 123 Ghosal, op.cit., p. 157. Ghosal further mentions that the flotilla of boats maintained by Naranārāyaṇa was under the naval commander Bhakṣmalā (Buktulung) and Teṇu. op.cit., p. 134.
- 124 R.C. Majumder (ed.), Traveller's Travels in India, 1781-1800 p. 103 quoted in ^{R.C. Majumder (ed.),} Bengal Desher Itihāsa (Bengali), Vol. II, 1385, pp. 120-21.
- 125 Martin, op.cit., p. 433, Vol. III.
- 126 Ghosal, op.cit., p. 224.
- 127 C. Wessels, op.cit., p. 128.
- 128 K.C. Pathak (ed.), op.cit., p. 104.
- 129 Mercer and Chauvet, op.cit., p. 12.
- 130 U.C. Lekharu (ed.), Kathā Gurūśrīti, Nalbari, 1952.

A. Guha, op.cit., p. 18.

- 131 Amanatullah, Prācīn Saikā, Published in fortnightly Bengali journal. "Koch Bihar Darpan", 1938, p. 4.

The author gives the list of following places :

'Balarāmpura, Gītāldaha, Bāmanhāt, Kurā, Dinhāt, Sāhebgunj, Vetāguri, Gosālganj, Nekīgunj, Tufānganj, Śhikhuri, Rānidāngā, Beksīgunj, Kāsiyābāri, Śhībpur, Khāttimāri, Okhāndighi, Bālā, Bālārhat, Kseti, Mārāghat, Uchalpukhri and Cyāngrābāndhā'.

- 132 Horton Ryley, op.cit., p. 111.

Blochmann, however, says, "Cacchegata is the place where the merchants from China meet. Cacchegate is

Chishakote, north of the town of Koch Bihar and south of Baksa Fort, Longitude $89^{\circ}35'$, in the Bengal Duars. It is now British".

H. Blochmann, Contributions to the Geography and History of Bengal, Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1968, p. 34.

133 Hakluyt, The Second Volume of Principal Navigators' Voyages, p. 257, London, Anno 1599.

134 Ghosal, op. cit., p. 186.

"Among the eighteen Duars (entrances) to the Kingdom of Bhutan, five in the West were situated on the border of the kingdom of Kānata. The other Duars were to its east viz., on the northern border of the kingdom under Parikshit".

135 Markham, elements R. Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet and the journey of Thomas Manning to Lhasa, 1876, Reprinted by Manjusri Publishing House, New Delhi, 1971, Intro. p. Liv.

136 Wessels, op. cit., p. 128.

137 N. K. Vasu, op. cit., p. 192.

138 B. K. Barua, op. cit., p. 108.

139 S. C. Ghosal, op. cit., p. 167;

Darrang Rāja Vaisāvali also records that trade and commerce flourished in the kingdom.

Cf. Bānījagu Gope Bānījā Kara :

139 H. N. Chowdhury, The Chakriat Estates, p. 42.

- 140 Ghosal, op.cit., p. 157.
- 141 Ibid., p. 206.
- 142 Ibid., p. 325.
- 143 Turner, op.cit., p. 11.
- 144 A. Deb, Ganesh Behar and Bhutan in the context of Tibetan Trade, published in Kailash, a journal of Himalayan Studies, 1973, pp. 81-82.

- 145 Mercer and Chauvet, op.cit., p. 13.

<u>Export</u>	<u>Mounds</u>	<u>Import</u>	<u>Mounds</u>
Tobacco	100,000	Salt	10,000
Mustard Seeds	10,000	Jaggery	3,000
Opium	Small quantity	Iron	Small quantity.

.....

APPENDIX I

ADMINISTRATION

The rule of succession as evident in case of the Koch rulers was primarily guided by the law of Primogeniture as usually followed by most of the rulers of other parts of the country. Members belonging to the royal blood were generally considered for the throne, though at a later period the line of the original Koch dynasty was cut off, and the rulers were selected from among the members of the Nasir Deo and Dewan Deo families.¹

The king's legal right to the throne was acknowledged by the performance of abhiseka (coronation), the ceremony which was popular from ancient times in India. With the introduction of Brahmanical religion in the Kāmatā-Koch Kingdom, the Koch kings were coronated through the Sastric rites. The Brāhmanas who conducted these royal functions used to give the name (abhiseka-nāma) to the kings as for instance, on his accession Viśu took the name Viśvasiṃha.² His coronation, as we get from the Darrang Rājyasamvālī was performed in pomp and grandeur.^{2a} During his installation, all the royal insignia, viz., the Umbrella, Sceptre, the white gāsur (cowrie), the Flag etc. were displayed. Śiśyasimha (śiśu), his brother held the royal umbrella over his head.³

Viśvasiṃha's birth has been ascribed to divine origin. It is said in the Rājopācchyaṇa that Viśvasiṃha was

a son begotten of Mahādeva (Lord Śiva) and his mother was Hīrā, the wife of Haridāsa (Hariyā mandala).⁴ Thus the descendants of Viśvasiṃha henceforth began to claim their descent from Śiva. The adoption of Saivism by the early rulers and its popularity among the people as a whole, perhaps, conveniently prepared the ground to relate Viśvasiṃha's birth with the above tradition.

As regards the origin of Kingship Lakṣmīdhara⁵ one of the early Nivandhakāras, quotes Manu's dogma of divine creation of the king 'out of particles of the eight Regents of the quarters; so as to make him a superman'. Similarly the Barrans Rāisvāsīrālī seems to have echoed the version of the Bṛhadharmapurāṇa while describing the qualities of mahārāja Viśvasiṃha.⁶

'Viśvasiṃha was a Brahmā in creativity, Hṛaikeśa in the well-being of the subjects, Mahesā in putting down enemies and wicked-subjects, Indira in war, Kuvaga in giving away alms, and candra in performing religious rites and so on and so forth'.^{6a}

From an inscription engraved on the temple of Viṣṇu in Nepal at the orders of Rūpematī Devī it is learnt that Naranārāyaṇa the king of Kāmatā-Koch kingdom who conquered all his enemies was like Indra.^{6b}

Śrināth Brāhmaṇa, a court poet described Viṣṇuārāyaṇa

as the Hdaygiri (the hill from which the sun rises).⁷

An original deed of land grants issued by Prānanārāyaṇa to a Brāhmaṇa, also contains an eulogy describing the king as the Indra of the world, whose fame has risen like the moon from the churning of ocean of his enemies, by his arms like Nandaśā hill.⁸ His character has also been depicted in the inscription offered by the king on the door of the temple of Kāmaśeṣvarī as refulgent like the Sun in prowess and in punishing (the wicked).⁹

The Darrang Rājyaśāśvalī further enumerates the moral virtues of the king. The king was sweet tongued. His towering personality as being the preserver of truthfulness like Pārvatī, learning like Sarasvatī, righteousness like Vrhaspati fell upon his subjects a tremendous impact. The people of the kingdom thus accepted him laudably.¹⁰

Under the influence of Hindu political ideology, the rulers of the Koch dynasty conformed to the basic issues as laid down in the Hindu political texts. The Koch ruler Viśvasimha upheld the idea of Dharma above all. The Hindu conception of Dharma is taken from the idea of established right. It speaks of social order based on law, conduct and worship which aims at attaining social solidarity. The state acts as a constituent of Society, which gives Dharma top priority and it is noted that Dharma prescribes the duty of the Government and also for the well-being of the society of

various social orders (Varnas). In the words of Manu : "The King has been created (to be) the protector of the classes (Varna) and orders, who, all according to their rank, discharge their social duties".¹¹ The erection and maintenance of numerous temples, land grants made to the Brāhmanas indicate the manner in which the rulers of the Kāmata-Koch kingdom patronised the Brāhmanical religion.

The king was the real head of the kingdom. He was the head of all the branches, viz., Executive, judiciary and legislative. It is noticed before that he was not only the owner of the land but also the master of his subjects. It was at the king's disposal of both selling and granting of lands. Beveridge, Deputy Commissioner in his annual report for 1865-67 observed that prior to the appointment of British Commissioner, the king of Koch Bihar exercised his absolute power on every matter in the country.^{11a} The king could appoint or dismiss any officer and in case of any offence he could inflict severe punishment.

Viśvasmiha considered his subjects as his own children and ruled them accordingly.¹² King Naranārāyana was also liked by the people because of his wisdom and qualities. The people used to call him Dharmarāja.¹³ Prānanārāyana was also a benevolent ruler. He took care of the people's happiness. The Tārīkh-i-Assam, a contemporary work praises Prānanārāyana for his efficient discharge of

administration,¹⁴ Mahānārāyaṇa was known for his virtues and the king used to render punishment to the miscreants.¹⁵

As regards the qualities of the heir-apparent (Yuvarāja) and the Prime Minister we learnt from Darrang Rājavisāvalī that a prince should well acquire the knowledge of weapons. His conduct would be of grave but temperate disposition. He should refrain from all sorts of temptations. Faithfulness, non-sensuality, benevolence etc. are some of the essential ingredients required for the prince. He should always consult with the ministers.¹⁶

About the Prime Minister Darrang Rājavisāvalī further holds that he should hail from high family.¹⁷

Viśvasiṃha appears to have appointed Barishā and Vaihāgu as the ministers.¹⁸ Further, we learn that Narahari Dāsa was appointed as the Prime Minister of Viśvasiṃha at the request of the royal priest Sārvathama.¹⁹ The king appointed Payonidhi in event of his father's (Naraharidāsa's) death to the post of minister. During the period of Naranārāyaṇa, Kavindra Pātra acted as his minister. It is learnt from the geneological history of the Darrang Rāja family that Śukladhvaja was accompanied by Kavindra pātra in his campaign against Kāmarūpa, Manipura, Jayantiyā, Tipperāh, Heramba, Hajo and Sylhet.²⁰

It seems probable that there was a council of ministers who could aid and advise the kings. They occupied an important role in the administration of the country. During the maladministration arising out of the evil-designs of the Nākir Deo (the State Officer)²¹ or during the minority of a king the state ministers had to play an important task. The ministers would, on behalf of the minor king, administer the kingdom.²² The king used to consult with the ministers whenever necessary.²³ The Prime minister, as we learn from the Rājanākhyaṇa (p.40), was called khānāvī from the time of the king Rūpanārāyana (1704-14 A.D.).²⁴ The ministers were shown due respect by the kings.^{24a}

Apart from the ministers there were three important post of offices viz., Nākir Deo and Dayān Deo²⁵ and Suba. The former was obliged to hold umbrella²⁶ upon the king's head at the time of accession to the throne.

In order to maintain the bulk of administration a good number of posts were created from early times. Visvasinha, appointed a class of officers for the better management of the kingdom. We derive from the Deodhai Asmā Burāji a list of twelve officers called 'Karji' who were appointed by the king after defeating the Bhuyāns.²⁷

During the reign of Naranārāyana we come across the names of the following administrative officers whose actual

functions, however, are not very clear.^{27a} Of them, there were Kavindrapātra, Gadhādhār Chāonia, Purandar Laskara, Judhīsthira Kōyastha, Śrīrāmalaskara, Karnapura Giri, Sonāvara, Rūpavara Sardār, Kavirāja Gopāla Chāonia, Gadāl Barkāyastha.²⁸

A number of administrative assignments were given in the reign of Modanārāyana to the following persons :

- (1) Rūpā and Majumdār as Mustofī,
- (2) Indranārāyana Chakravarty as Chāklādār (ruler of a district or estate)
- (3) Gaurinandana Barkāyastha as Kārji
- (4) Visvanāth Sarmā as Pātra
- (5) Kāsināth as Khānis.²⁹

The officers with the title of Laskara, Bhuvān, Barnā etc. were posted at the extremities of the kingdom to keep peace and normalcy in the border areas.³⁰

Ambassador (Dūtas) were appointed by the kings to maintain proper relations with foreign powers. These were also the gagas or the spies who had to supply confidential news to the king when required.³¹ Mahārāja Naranārāyana, as noted earlier, is said to have sent Satānanda Karmī, Rāmesvara Sarmā, Kālakota Sardār, Dhumā Sardār, Udbhānda Chāonia and Syamarāy chāonia as an ambassador to Assam.³² He further

sent dūtas (kataki, used as local term) to the court of Manipur.³³ One Bīrāo Kārji is said to have carried on peace negotiations between the Ahom king and the Mughals at the instance of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa. S.N. Bhattacharyya, however, opines that there was no historical evidence³⁴ for such a peace negotiation.

It may be noted that the Mughal administrative system was introduced in Koch-Hājo kingdom of Parīksit who was, however, defeated by Mīrza Nathan along with Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa of the Kāmatā Kingdom.³⁵ The Mughals made some administrative innovations in Kāmarūpa for the purpose of collecting revenues, suppression of local insurrections and the conduct of Khedāi operations.³⁶ Among these administrative post mention may be made of Diwān, Bakāi (arranging revenue collection), the Karoris and the Faujḍars (collectors of revenues), Mustājirs (Revenue farmers) etc.³⁷

Abduḥ Salān, brother of Mukarram Khān was appointed Commander of the army in Koch Hājo to the west of the river Manās, while Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa was placed temporarily as an administrator, to the east of the above river.³⁸ Later on, we come across the influence of mughal administration on Koch Bihar, particularly when Mirjūnla made his conquest of Koch Bihar in 1661 A.D. during the regime of Prāṇanārāyaṇa, the Koch king.³⁹ Before his departure for Assam Mirjūnla

made an elaborate arrangement for the administration of the Koch Kingdom. The war materials captured from the ruler's armoury comprised 106 gunns, 145 janburak (small canon), 11 ramchancia and 123 matchlocks.⁴⁰

Isfandiyyār Beg (now Styled Khān), was appointed by Mirgūla to officiate as Faujdar of the conquered kingdom with 400 cavalry and 100 matchlockmen until the next incumbent Askar Khān arrived there.⁴¹ And other officers who were appointed to assist him were Saiyad Mohammad Sadek, Chief Justice, Kāsi Samu, the Dewān and Mīr Abdur Rezzāk and Khājā Kesrīdās as assistant Dewāns.⁴² However, the hold over the territory was transitory. Prānanārāyana came back to the country shortly and reconquered the kingdom.⁴³

It appears that from the time of Sultan Muhammad Suja, the Sūbedār of Bengal, the Kāmātā-Koch kingdom was called by the Mughals as Sarker Koch Bihar. It was divided into 246 parganāḥ and where as the Sarker Bengālthum was divided into 2 parganāḥ (Baharband and Bhitarband).⁴⁴

The king was the head of the judiciary. It has already been noticed that King Modanārāyana (1682-1693 A.D.) inflicted upon Jagatnārāyana death punishment, having been guilty of rebellion in collecting forces against the Rājāh, Jagatnārāyana's father Gosāin Mahīnārāyana also suffered death sentence.⁴⁵ Regarding the nature of civil and criminal justice, it is learnt that the

system was agreeable to the ancient custom of the country. Referring to the mode of judgement as existed during the period of the commissioner Mercer and Chauvet, it is mentioned in their report that 'all complaints are made in the first instance to Shew Persaud Mustofee and reported by him to the Maharanny, (on account of minority of the king), who issues order to him to summon the persons complained against. The complaint is then preferred to the Pundits appointed by the Maharanny for that purpose, when the same having been tried by them agreeable to the law of the Sastra, the persons found guilty are punished by the order of the Maharanny, according to the usage of the country'.⁴⁶

Speaking about the earlier administration of the Koch Kingdom Beveridge points out that there was a general deterioration in the administrative system of the country. 'There was no cohesion or real subordination in any part of the administration from top to bottom. Every officer did what was right in his eyes, and acknowledged no authority but that of the Raja and his subordination even to him was in most cases only lip-service'.⁴⁷ Colonel Haughton who took charge in the last phase of the 18th century A.D. also remarked that the administration set up by the old Mahārājās were "exceedingly cheap". Payment of the officers was very low. An officer had to live honestly by holding three or four different offices.⁴⁸

Military Organisation

The Koch kings took great measures for organising a vast army almost on traditional lines comprising infantry, cavalry, elephantry and naval force. It started from the period of Visvasimha who founded the kingdom by defeating the Bhuyāns. In spite of the stubborn resistance from the Bhuyāns, Visvasimha came out victorious and established a stable government.⁴⁹ Later on, during Narenārāyana's regime the military power increased to a considerable extent. It was during his time that the flag of victory was carried over almost all the territories of the North-Eastern India by the able stewardship of his brother Śukladhvaja who inflicted a sanguinary defeat upon the enemies by prowess of his arms. His war technique greatly resembled with that of the manner in which the Kite used to get hold of its prey. Thus Śukladhvaja was called Cilārā.⁵⁰ The system is similar to the modern blitzkrieg tactics.

There was a regular system of gradation of officers in the Koch army. Visvasimha is said to have introduced the system. Darrang Rāja Vatsāvalī supplies us with the information that there were officers like Thākuriā, Saikia, Hāixi, Umrāha and Nawab. The pāiks who constituted the lowest military unit were commanded as follows : Thākuriā were the commanders of 20, the Saikia 100, the Hāixi 1000, the Umrāha 3,000 and the Nawab of 22 Umrāhas.⁵¹

We come across the information that Visvasimha appointed Sisvasimha, as the Raikat and the chief commander.⁵² During the reign period of Upendranarayana (1714 to 1763 A.D.) the office of the commander-in-chief was held by Bhavaniprasad Baksi.⁵³

Buddhaya was a ganapati who flourished during the period of Visvasimha. He was said to have well trained in infantry, archery and possessed an effective eye-sight.⁵⁴ Maharaja Prananarayana employed as many as four generals for his army. They were Aniruddha, Candranarayana, Srirama Kumara and Khandadhar.⁵⁵

Soldiers were mainly recruited from among the young people. It is noticed earlier that there was a number of 52,00,000 soldiers at Visvasimha's time, which is undoubtedly an exaggeration.⁵⁶ A large number of elephants, horses, asses, buffaloes and camels were in his army.⁵⁷

Naranarayana marched against the Ahom king in 1662 A.D. at the head of 5,32,000 soldiers.⁵⁸

It is probable that system of conscription was adopted by the Koch Kings in order to ensure security and safety of the kingdom. The system of gradation of officers and the palka allotted at their commands as noticed earlier seems to point out the fact that there was an indirect

influence of the Mansabdarī system of the Mughals. As regards the war equipments, we have taken notice of a few war materials such as guns, samburaks, matchlocks, ranshangis which were confiscated by Mirjumla at the time of the conquest of Koch Bihar. Shihābuddin Talish who accompanied Mirjumla states that the people used the sword, fire lock, and arrows, as weapons. The arrows were generally poisoned which in most cases proved fatal.⁵⁹

Navy

The naval force also constituted an important constituent of the Koch army. In the Ahom invasion of Narānarāyana, a flotilla of boats under the naval Commander Bhaktamālā and Teju proceeded by river.⁶⁰ There ensued a heavy naval combat between the groups and cannonade was exchanged on the Hariyā river resulting in the defeat of the Ahoms.⁶¹ That Koch Kings maintained naval power has been attested by the Muhammaidan historians in later period.^{61a}

The Koch rulers also paid attention to the protection of the Kingdom from foreign attack. It is said that Visvasimha constructed a long earthen wall from Karatoyā to the banks of the Brahmputra to strengthen the southern defences of the Kingdom.⁶² From the Gurnilā of Rāma Rāya we get the following

description of the fortification of the Kāmatā Koch territory at the time^{of} King Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa. 'There was fortification on all sides of the kingdom except in three places where the gates like Sālgārā, Rarisiā and Bāghdāra were constructed.'⁶³

Notes and References

1 The rulers belonging to the original Koch dynasty from the period of Visvasimha and those of the Nasir Deo and Dewān Deo families beginning from Rūpnārāyana have been taken notice of in the preceding chapter on Historical Background.

2 S.C.Ghosal, A History of Cooh Behar, p.111.

2a N.C.Sharma, Darrang Rājāsāvalī, pp.23-25.

3 S.C.Ghosal, op.cit., p.111.

Darrang Rājāsāvalī, however, records that Visvasimha was made prince (Yuvarāja) by the king, Visvasimha - See p.31.

4 Biswanath Das (ed.), Rājāsāvalī, pp.9-10.

Darrang Rājāsāvalī calls Visvasimha as Naresvara (the God of the People), See pp.27-29.

5 Trivandrum Sanskrit series, Edition, p.28 2

Also see the Age of Imperial Kanauj, ed. by R.C.Majumdar, Bombay, 1964, p.236.

6 According to the Bṛhadḍhamapurāna (III, 3, 8-9)

Brahmā created the King's body by taking lordship from Indra, prowess from Asni, cruelty from Yama, good fortune from the Moop, riches from Kuvera and goodness from Rāmajanārōdana, and the king alone and no other should be recognised as Indra.

6a N.C.Sharma, op.cit., pp.26-31.

6b S.C.Ghosal, op.cit., p.201.

- 7 Śrināth Brāhmaṇa, Ādiparva, p. 113
 (Mahābhārata) quoted in S.C. Ghosal's op.cit., p. 192.
- 8 Ibid., p. 205.
- 9 Ibid., p. 206.
- 10 N.C. Sharma, op.cit., pp. 26-31.
- 11 Manu, VII, p. 221.
- 11a H.N. Chowdhury, The Cooh Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement, p. 296.
- 12 Cf. Kerila suk kama, Śatīrtha Devadhara,
Putrabate praiśka nāśna || - V. 131
 N.C. Sharma, op.cit., p. 26.
- 13 S.C. Ghosal, op.cit., p. 165.
- 14 Ibid., p. 201.
- 15 Paramānanda, Vanaparva, p. 4,
 (Mahābhārata)
- 16 N.C. Sharma, op.cit., pp. 32-33.
- 17 Ibid., pp. 33-34.
- 18 N.C. Sharma (ed.), op.cit., p. 34.
 Bahiṇā was in charge of war and foreign affairs
 and Baihgu was the minister for judicial affair.
- 19 H.N. Vasu, op.cit., Vol. II, pp. 165, 167.
- 20 Ibid., p. 167.
- 21 S.C. Ghosal, op.cit., p. 215.
- 22 Ibid., p. 233.

23 N.C.Sharma, op.cit., pp.40-41.

We come across the names of various ministers from early times such as Kabi Bhūsana, Kavi Ratna (Rājopākhyāna, p.33), Bhaṣanāth Kārji, Rāma Candra Kārji (Ghosal, op.cit., p.207), Bisvanāth Mustāfi, a son of Rūpa candra Mustofī (Ibid., p.219).

24 Ghosal also informs us that Mahārājā Rūpanārāyana retained all the ministers in their earlier posts and from his period the Khasawīs began to act as Chief Minister. See History of Cooch Behar, p.221.

24a B.Das(ed.), Rājopākhyāna, p.28; Ghosal, op.cit., p.221.

25 The Officers Nāsir and Dewān got the title 'Deva' and were thus called Nāsir Deo, Dewān Deo. We learn from the Rājopākhyāna (p.40) that everybody belonging to the dynasty of Viśvasimha were of Deo(Deva) title and for this the Nāsirs and Dewāns were called as Nāsir Deo or Nāsir Devatā and Dewān Deo or Dewān Devatā. But Ghosal observes that in later period, the royal family took the name 'Dev' or Deo (Deva) e.g. Nāsir Dev, Dewān Dev, Dīna Dev. (A History of Cooch Behar, p.212 fn).

It appears that the contentions of both Joyānāth Munsī and Amanatullah are found to be wrong as we learn from the report of Mercer and Chauvet referred to below that Nāsir Deo and Dewān Deo posts were held by a Brāhmaṇa and a Kāyastha respectively. Thus the Nāsir and the Dewān could not be the members of the same royal family.

26 According to the Rājopākhyāna (p.31) Mahārāja Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa is said to have appointed Kumār Mahīnārāyaṇa as Nāsir who held Umbrella upon Vīraṇārāyaṇa, the son of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa at the time of Coronation. But according to the report of the Commissioners Mercer and Chauvet, as noticed earlier, the Rāikats performed the umbrella ceremony during the installation of five kings from Viśvasīmha and afterwards, Mahārāja Madanārāyaṇa appointed Mahīnārāyaṇa and his son Yajnanārāyaṇa successively as Nāsirs (Vol.II, 1788, pp. 19-20, 169). We further learn from this report that right from the time of Viśvasīmha to that of Mahārāja Prānanārāyaṇa, a Brāhmaṇa was Nāsir, a Kāyastha, Dewān. There were other officers of Kārjī-as Scobah and Sennapāṭhī as Rāikats.

27 Cf. Bhakurā Kārjī, Pāro Kārjī, Nicilā Kārjī, Curchāl Kārjī, Satānanda Kārjī, Meghā Kārjī, Pūdrā Kārjī, Bholā Kārjī, Bīru Kārjī, Sadhānana Kārjī, Harichandra Kārjī, Ripuñjaya Kārjī.
See S.K.Bhuyan (ed.), Deodhāi Assam Burañīi, Gauhati, Reprint, 1976, p.126.

27a The Posts created by the various kings of the Kamatā-Koch dynasty are as follows :
Kotwāl (The Wardens), Deuri, Chomdars, Biswās, Kanḍali, Makaddan, Galmali, Karmī, Ahudi, Daptariā, Sat Kāyastha, Medhi, Rājopākhyāna (p.45), mentions about Khāgācharā

(Bodyguard), Khas Daryani, Bhāndār Thākūr (Store-keeper), Majindār, Dwārī (gate-keeper).

- 28 Ghosal, op.cit., p. 152.
- 29 Ibid., p. 213.
- 30 Ibid., p. 118.
- 31 N.C. Sharma (ed.), op.cit., p. 39.
- 32 Ghosal, p. 130.
- 33 N.C. Sharma, op.cit., pp. 82-83.
- 34 S.N. Bhattacharyya, A History of Mughal North East Frontier Policy, pp. 160-61 fn.
- 35 S.K. Bhuyan (ed.) Bahāristān-i-Gharbī, Vol. I, Gauhati, 1936, pp. 222ff.
- 36 S.N. Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p. 165.
- 37 S.K. Bhuyan (ed.), op.cit., p. 272.
- 38 Loc.cit., S.N. Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p. 167.
- 39 Fathiyah-i-ibriyya, tr. by H. Blochmann, J.A.S.B. Vol. 41, Nos. 1-4, 1872, pp. 66ff.
- 40 Ibid., p. 67, Also see J.N. Sarker, The Life of Mirgula, 2nd revised ed. New Delhi, 1979, p. 289.
- 41 S.N. Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p. 307.
- 42 Ghosal, op.cit., p. 326.
- 43 J.N. Sarker, op.cit., p. 290.
- 44 Ghosal, op.cit., 193.
- 45 Mercer and Charvet, Vol. II, p. 169.

However, S.C. Ghosal draws our attention while he maintains that Yajñanārāyana who, after the death of the

king Mahīndranārāyaṇa, usurped the throne and declared him King. This infuriated the Rāikats of Baikānthopura. They regarded him as a rebel and fought against Yajñanārāyaṇa who was defeated and killed in the battle. See

A History of Cooh Behar, p. 219.

46 Mercer & Chauvet, Vol. II, p. 11, S.C. Ghosal, op. cit., pp. 277-78.

47 H.N. Chowdhury, op. cit., p. 296.

48 Ibid., p. 297.

49 P. Gohain Barua, op. cit., p. 125;
S.K. Bhuyan (ed.), op. cit., p. 175.

50 Cf. Jhāna divā hīre iadi Bhairavī cāraṇā
Prasāngiā saba cilā rāi nām thailā V. 340
N.C. Sharma, op. cit., p. 69.

51 Ibid., p. 40.

52 Ghosal, op. cit., p. 117.

53 Ibid., p. 229.

54 N.C. Sharma (ed.), op. cit., p. 35.

55 Ghosal, op. cit., p. 208.

56 N.C. Sharma, op. cit., p. 40.

57 Cf. Hastī ghorā gardhva mahiṣa uta jata |
Asankhaya āchay tāra lekha kaiba kata ||
V. 199.

Loc. cit.

58 Ibid., p. 72.

But we learn from A History of Cooh Behar that Sukladhvaja set out with sixty thousand soldiers of the Koch, Dom and Kavi (Keot ?) tribes. See Ghosal, op.cit., p. 134.

³The Ākbar-nāmah (Vol. III, tr. by Beveridge, p. 1067) tells us, "Koch has 4,000 horses, 200,000 infantry, 700 elephants, 1000 war boats". However, in the Ain-i-Akbari (Vol. II, Eng. tr. by Jarrett, p. 117). Abul Fazi makes a more modest estimate. He says, "The chief of Koch commands 1,000 horses, 100,000 foot".

59 Fathiyya-i-ihriyya, tr. by H. Blochmann, J.A.S.B. 1872, p. 67.

60 ^{Supra} Ibid. Chapter on Economic life.

61 ^{Ghosal, op.cit.} Ibid., p. 136.

61a Ibid., p. 136.

61a R.K. Mookerji, A History of Indian Shipping and Maritime Activity, Bombay, 1912, pp. 225ff.

62 Ghosal, op.cit., p. 121.

63 K.C. Pathak (ed.), Gurullia, p. 103.

It may be mentioned in this connection that after Mirzula's conquest of Koch Bihar, the administration of the conquered territory was entrusted to Isfendiyar Beg who as recorded by Shihab-ud-din gave orders to make the yak Duar levelled with the ground, and the cutting of trees which infested the kingdom.

See H. Blochmann, op.cit., p. 67.

A P P E N D I X II

COINAGE

It is difficult to say to what extent trade, crafts and money circulation prevailed in the region under discussion during 13th-15th centuries. No local coins of the periods, if any, are known. The only coins extant are those minted and left behind by the Turko-Afghan raiders.¹ It is likely that imported cowries continued to be in circulation. For we find cowries had been used as medium of exchange both in Gauda and Kāmarūpa kingdoms.² Barter nevertheless remained the main form of exchange alongside of the use of cowries and the Bengal Sultanate coins coming into the region through trade.

From the late 16th century onwards, if not earlier, information is more detailed about some growth taking place in trade and crafts and some advance made towards monetisation and specialisation. The emergence of regular coinage marks a definite stage of, and also helps in, the economic growth of the Kingdom of Kāmata-Koch Bihar.

After the exit of Hussain Shāh³ from the scene of Kāmata-pura, the whole country was ruled by a number of petty independent Chiefs. Visvasimha seized this opportunity and in course of time made himself the master of the country west of the Badnadi.⁴ The Āsām Burāñji⁵ informs us that the predecessors

of Visvasimha did not issue coins. But, though the Dakṣiṇa Rājā Vasiṣṭhī and the Rājapāthyāna does not give us any indication about the coinage of Visvasimha,⁶ the Rājapāthyāna⁷ records the tradition of striking coins by the ruler. No coin of Visvasimha has, however, been discovered.

The rulers of Kamata-Koch Bihar are said to have issued coins of gold, silver, brass and copper but we have not come across any coin of gold or brass of the earlier rulers so far.⁸ These coins were known as Nārāyaṇī as the Successor of Visvasimha assumed the title Nārāyaṇa, though the Alangirnāmah suggests that the name is derived from the family deity which was Nārāyaṇa.⁹ The coins were also known as Śiva-taṅkā as the rulers generally describe themselves as the "devotees of Śiva" (Cf. Śiva-Carana-Kaṇala-Madhukarava on the ~~xxx~~ reverse of the coins).

Stapleton thinks that the coins of Hussain Shāh was in circulation long after his ~~xxx~~ departure from Kāmatāpura and the Nārāyaṇī coins were designed in imitation of those of Hussain Shāh,¹⁰ although we have reason to believe that these coins were influenced not to any mean extent by those of Danuṣmardana issued earlier in Bengali Scripts.¹¹ The influence of Nārāyaṇī coins were, however, greatly increased. In fact, it was in circulation not only in the whole of north Bengal, but in Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Tibet and in the kingdom of the Ahoms (Assam). The Ahom Chiefs

used to realise revenues in Nārāyanī coins upto the beginning of the 19th century inspite of the fact that they had their own coinage.¹² The Bhutiyās were said to have removed a die of Nārāyanī coin to Bhutan in 1770 and started issuing Devtākā,¹³ Earlier they used to make their coins from the Koch Bihar mint.¹⁴

According to the terms of the Treaty ^{the fifth day of} (April, 1773) that was concluded between the Hon'ble the East India Company and Rājā of Kāmātā-Koch Bihar (known as Koch Bihar), the kingdom became a protection~~ed~~ state under the East India Company. But the report of the Commissioners deputed by Government to visit the State in 1788 shows that at ^{that} time power of ~~coining~~ ^{coining} money was fully exercised by the Rājās¹ of Koch Bihar. In that year, as mentioned above by Lewin,¹⁵ twenty eight to thirty thousand Nārāyanī half-rupees were coined. The quantity ~~quantity~~ annually minted, appeared to depend upon the rate of exchange, at which French Arcot rupees were procurable, as from this coin, after some further alloy, was manufactured the Nārāyanī (i.e. Nārāyanī) rupee, and as the Arcot rupee contained originally some 56 per cent of copper, the intrinsic value of the silver in Nārāyanī (i.e. Nārāyanī) but little exceeded half its own weight. The Nārāyanī (i.e. Nārāyanī) coins passed current throughout Koch Bihar and the neighbouring districts of Goalpara, Rangpur, Jalpaiguri, etc. No gold coins appear to have been issued into currency from the mint. A few years after the Bengal Government imposed restrictions, nearly amounting to entire suppression, on the mint of Koch Bihar,

on the ground that the coin issued therefrom was of so debased a quality, as to be entirely depreciated as a currency beyond the southern limits of the District.

The prerogative of striking and issuing coin under the image and superscription of the reigning prince is still however normally exercised, a certain number of gold and silver coins being struck upon the accession of each new Rājā. The Naraini (i.e. Nārāyaṇī) rupee is no longer current, nor is its value used as a denomination in accounts, the currency of the country being now the same as in British Regulation Districts".

Naranārāyana

The full rupees of the rulers of Kāmatā-Koch Bihar are fine broad coins, with all elements of the design clearly visible, but they are known upto the time of Prānanārāyana (1633-65 A.D.) and from that time onwards the half rupee had become the standard coin of the country. The coins of Koch Bihar are preserved in a number of museums and private collections of India and England. Some of the types of the Nārāyaṇī coins issued by the rulers before the treaty of 1773 are given ~~next~~ here.

TYPE I (Full coin)

R (Silver)	1447	Legend	Legend
	Śaka	<u>on obverse</u>	<u>on Reverse</u>
		<u>Śrī Śrīma</u>	<u>Śrī Śrī</u>
		<u>Naranārāyana</u>	<u>Śiva-carana</u>
		<u>bhūpālasya</u>	<u>Kamala madhu</u>
		<u>Śake 1447</u>	<u>Karasya</u>

[Journal of the Numismatic Society
of India (or J.N.S.I.), Vol. XXX, pp. 167ff.]

(see pl. A, No. 1, & pl. B, No. 1)

TYPE II

(Unique quarter-Rupee R (Silver), round, 15.25 mm. in
coin) diameter, weight : 2.70 gms, Date illegible

Legend	Legend
<u>on Obverse</u>	<u>on Reverse</u>
Śrī Śrī	Śrī Śrī
Man-Naranāra (ya)	(Śi)va-carana
na-bhūpāla(Śya) Śake	(Ka)mala-madhu
	(Ka)Nasya

[J.N.S.I., Vol. XXXVI, pp. 115-16.]

TYPE III (Two Gold A/ coins)

Round, 29.8 mm. in Diameter, weight : 12.15 gms/12.43 gms.

1486 Śake

Legend on Obverse

along the border outside
the circle Digvijayī Samara-
Simha - Śrīman - Naranārāyaṇa-
bhūpalasya - Śāke 1486

Legend on Reverse
in five-line with the
device of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa
at the centre and a 5-pointed
star at the end.

Śrī Śrī - Haragaurī-
cara (ṅaka)mala madhukarasya

[J.N.S.I. XXXVII pp. 114-115;
Also The Numismatic Circular,
London, April, 1931, p. 115]

(See PL. A, No. 1A, & PL. B, No. 1A)

This coin ^{(Type III) rightly} has been described by N.G. Rhodes as false on the basis of the style of the reverse which is more similar to those of Raghudeva (dated Śaka 1510) than to the style of earlier coins [The Numismatic Circular, op. cit., p. 117]

Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa

It was the usual practice of the rulers to issue coins with a single date (in the Śaka era) which is generally associated with that of their accession. "But during the reign of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa (c. 1587-1627), a subsidiary date in the local Koch Bihar era, Rāja Śaka was added, which may be converted to the Christian era by adding approximately 1510 years." The Rāja Śakas appear on the coins of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa are 98 and 92 which are equivalent to 1608 A.D. and 1602 A.D., whereas the other date, 1509 Śaka (=1587 A.D.) corresponding the accession year, on all the coins seem to suggest that 'the Śaka era was

left unchanged throughout the reign, and did not necessarily represent the date when the coins were struck'.

TYPE I (Full coin)

Round, Silver (A), weight : 10.25 gms, Size : 29 mm

1509 Śaka

Legend on Obverse

Śrī Śrīma

Lakṣmīnārāyaṇasya

Śāke

1509

Legend on Reverse

Śrī Śrī

Śiva-Carṇa

Kaṇala māhu

Karasya

[J.N.S.I. XXX, p. 172]

TYPE II

Same as TYPE I
with Rāja Śaka 92

(S.C.Ghosal, A History of
Cooch Behar, pp. 345-47)

[For other discussions on the date of Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa's
Coins see J.N.S.I., XXXIV, pp. 93-96; J.N.S.I., XXXVII,
pp. 157-69 & Journal of Ancient Indian History,
Calcutta University, VII, pp. 189-93]

(See PL. A, no II & PL. B, no II)

TYPE III

Same as TYPE II
with Rājasāka 98

(N.G.Rhodes' Collection)

TYPE IV (Half coin)

Same as TYPE I

[S.C.Ghosal, Loc.cit.]

Viranārāyana

The Śaka date 1548 appearing on the coins of Viranārāyana appears almost to correspond with the Rajasaka date of 117. A few coins of Viranārāyana have so far been discovered. According to some, these were not actually coins but medallions issued in honour of Lord Kṛṣṇa during the life-time of Lakṣmīnārāyana, possibly with the latter's permission.

[P.K.Bhattacharyya, in J.N.S.I.,
XXXIV, p. 96]

TYPE I (Full coin of Viranārāyana)

(2)

Round, Silver (AR), 10.25 gm/10.10 gm.

30.45 mm/29.60 mm, 1548 Śaka

Legend on obverseŚrī Śrī nadvīranārāyanasya ŚākeLegend on ReverseŚrī ŚrīKṛṣṇa-caranaKaṇala-madhukarasya[J.N.S.I., XXX III, pp. 129-31]

(See PL. A, NO III, & PL. B, NO III)

TYPE II (Unique Half Coin)

Round, Silver (R), 4.86 gms., 22.20 mm.

Legend on ObverseŚrī Śrī madvīpārāyaṇasya śā(ke)Legend on ReverseŚrī Śrī(Kṛ) ṇa - madhu(Ka) raava[J.N.S.I., XXX, pp. 131-32]

Prānārāyaṇa

Prānārāyaṇa seems to have changed the earlier system of striking both Śaka and Rāja Śaka on the coins. Thus, his coins either have a śaka date or a Rājasaka date, but not both. Again, under the Na of Nārāyaṇa, a symbol was sometimes added, such as a cross or a crescent moon, with or without a dot. This symbol may stand for the mint-master, or some other aspects of the mint organisation.¹⁷ It may be pointed out that for the first and possibly only time (besides, of course, the second date on the doubtful gold coin of Nārāyaṇa) in the series, there are at least two dates in Śaka era, while there are other dates, all in Koch Bihar era. Thus the date on each coin indicates the actual date of issue, 'rather than any fixed date'. The unique gold coin of Prānārāyaṇa,¹⁸ however, bears the legend and the date 753 in Nagri Script, and this appears to be the Nepalese era

commencing in 880 A.D. The presence of the Nepalese *Sauvat* is undoubtedly in commemoration of the marriage of *Rūpmatī Devī*, sister of *Prānanārāyaṇa* with *Pratāpamalla*, king of the Malla dynasty of Nepal.¹⁹

TYPE I

Full coin of *Prānanārāyaṇa*

Round, Silver (A), Śaka 1554/or 1555

Legend on Obverse

śrī śrī na

Prāna Nārāya

naśva Śaka

1554/or, 1555

Legend on Reverse

śrī śrī

Śiva carana

Kamala-madhu

Karasya

(See pl. B, no. IV)

For another full coin with 130 Rāja Śaka, see pl. B, no. IV A

TYPE II

Half coin

Round, Silver (A), Date Śaka 1555

Legend on obverse and Reverse as in TYPE I

TYPE III

Half coin

Round, Silver (A), Date in Rāja Śaka

N.G. Rhodes²⁰ has read different Rāja Śaka appearing on this set of types. These are 128, 129 (?), 130, 131, 140, 141, 147(?) 14 - , 150(?), 151.

(See pl. B, no. IV B)

TYPE IV

Full coin (Unique gold coin)

Round, gold (A), dated 753 Nepalese Samvat starting in '880 A.D. This is presented in the provincial Museum, Lucknow and noticed by V.V.Mirashi,²¹

During the expedition against Assam led by the Mughal General Mir Jumla, Koch Bihar was occupied by the Mughals and Prānārāyana, had to seek refuge in Bhutan in his 151 Rāja Śaka and stayed there sometime. At this time a half coin made of copper was struck bearing the name of Aurangzeb in Bengali script, but this does not contain any date. The city of Koch Bihar was renamed Alangirnagara from where the coin was issued.²²

Modanārāyana

Modanārāyana, son and successor of Prānārāyana, ruled from 1665-66 to 1680-81. His reign is marked by series of disturbances. No full coin of Modanārāyana has been discovered. A number of half coins (AR) of this ruler are supposed to have been issued in different Rāja Śakas. In the History of Cooh Behar²³ we get the year 179. Rhodes²⁴ point out that the years 15 — , 170(?), 171 are traceable in his collection. How the year 179 appears on the coin of Modanārāyana whose reign continued only upto the year 171,

cannot be explained properly at the moment.

After Naganārāyana, all the rulers of Koch Bihar who ruled to the end of our period (i.e. 1773 A.D.) are credited to have issued half coins, mostly of silver, in accordance with the usual practice of the dynasty at least at the time of their accession. ^{cf. P.L.B., nos. V & VI} Most of these coins have been noticed in the History of Koch Bihar²⁵ except those of Mahindrānārāyana the last ruler of the line of Virnārāyana. Recently, however, one half coin () of Mahindrānārāyana has been discovered.²⁶

Mahindrānārāyana died in 1693 A.D. and as there was no living descendant of Mahārāja Virnārāyana, Chatra Nāsir Yajñanārāyana who was the son of Mahinārāyana, the brother of Mahārāja Virnārāyana, declared himself king on the ground that he was the oldest of the near (Sapinda) relations of the deceased.²⁷ It is likely that he also issued half coins and one such coin has been noticed in the Koch Bihar Treasury.²⁸

Notes and References

- 1 A ^{big} legend hoard of 13,500 pieces of Silver coins on the left bank of the Dharikā discovered near the temple of Kāmatesvarī which is 3 miles South-West of Dinhalā. See E. Thomas, The Initial Coinage of Bengal, 1899. The coins of Samsuddin Illiyas Shāh have been found in Kāmatāpura, while some coins of Sikandar Shāh also found in Kāmatāpura bear legends Qawliṣṭān alīa ^{Kāmrūp} and are dated 759 Hijri (= 1358 A.D.) Cf. Catalogue of the coins in the Indian Museum, Vol. II, p. 152.
- 2 Cf. The Tezpur Rock Inscription of Harjarasvarnā, Kāmarūpasāhasāvalī, 2nd edition, p. 170; also Cf. "the least gift (Lakṣmanasena) used to bestow was a lak of Kaṇḍis", from the Tabaṣṭ-i-Nāsirī quoted in R.C. Majumdar (ed.), The History of Bengal, Vol. I, Dacca, 1943, p. 247.
- 3 Hussain Shāh celebrated his success against the Khen dynasty by the creation of a Madrasah the inscription of which bears a date equal to 1501-02 A.D. and issued coins which described him as "conqueror of Kamru, Kāmakā, Jājnagar and Orishā", See A.W. Botham and R. Fiel, Catalogue of the Provincial Cabinet of coins, Assam (Supplementary), pp. 148-52.
- 4 Rai Gunabhīram Barua, Assam Barānī, p. 55.

According to one tradition Candana, a brother of Viśvasimha was installed to the throne at 1510 A.D., the starting date of Rājāsaka and after his death Viśvasimha became king. Capt. T.H. Lewin, An Account of the Koch Bihar State, Koch Bihar, 1876, p. 11.

5 Cf. śrī Vāhara Visvasimha Rajar purva kona Iska na Chila |

Raj Guhabhram Barua, op.cit., p. 249.

6 S.C.Ghosal, op.cit., p. 342.

7 Cf. ... 13 (tera) Śakāya mahārāja Visvasimha Simhāsana
prāpta haiyā āpana name Chirkājarap Kariyāchena |

Rājvasimhāvalī, 16 patra

(i.e. Visvasimha after having ascended the throne on 13
Rajasaka struck coins in his own name). See also JNSI,
XXXII, 1970, Pt.I, pp.40 ff.

8 From the Darrang Rājvasimhāvalī, we learn that
king Naranārāyana gave two hundred gold and fivethousand
silver coins to a Brāhmana named Nārāyana Chakravarty.

Cf. Ehi buli Brāhmanak Karilā sammān |

Duisata subernaṅṅ karilanta ān ||

Pañca Sahasrek rūpdilā bhāla cāi |

V. 602

See N.C.Sharma (ed.), Darrang Rājvasimhāvalī,


Gauhati, 1973, p. 123.

9 S.C.Ghosal, op.cit., p. 353; The Rās-na-Salatin (tr. by
Rampran Gupta in Bengali), p. 7, refers to the Nārāyaṇī coins.

10 S.C.Ghosal, loc.cit.

11 S.K.Chatterjee, Kirāta-Jana-Kṛti, The Asiatic Society,
Calcutta, 1974, p. 115.

12 Petition dated the 18th May, 1853 by Balaram Fukan and
others to the Government of India.

- 13 Surgeon Rennei, Bhutan and the Story of the Decears War, p.48; Captain S.Turner, Embassy to Tibet, p.143.
- 14 Surgeon Rennei, loc.cit.
- 15 Capt.T.H.Lewin, op.cit., pp.23-24.
- 16 Cf. N.G.Rhodes, Dated Coins of Cooch Behar (unpublished Ms. presented to P.K.Bhattacharyya by the author in London).
- 17 N.G.Rhodes, loc.cit. Some of these signs also occur in the Mughal coins, Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum, Vol.III, pp.358-60. The Rājapāthyā (B.Das ed., p.52) says that a flower was inscribed on the coins of Mahārāja Rājendranārāyana. The half moon appears in the coin of Dharendranārāyana or Harendranārāyana. The sign " ~ " signifying lordship was customary before the names of the living rulers of Koch Bihar. S.C.Ghosal, op.cit., p.355. On a coin of Prānanārāyana in N.G.Rhodes' collection we come across the Solomon's seal ().
- 18 V.V.Mirashi, A Gold coin of Prānanārāyana, J.N.S.I., III, Pt.II, 1941, pp.93-97.
- 19 Cf. The Inscription on the Temple of Ugratārā at Anantapur : for translation See S.C.Ghosal, op.cit., pp.20n, 202n.
- 20 N.G.Rhodes, loc.cit.
- 21 V.V.Mirashi, loc.cit.

22 J.N.S.I. XXX, 1968, p.173 fn.

The historian Khāfi Khān stated (1732 A.D.) that Nirgunla after conquering Koch Bihar struck coins in the name of the Emperor, Khāfi Khān, Munta Khabul-lahāb, in the Elliot and Dowson, Vol.VII, First Indian Ed. 1964, p. 265.

23 S.C.Ghosal, p.350.

24 H.G.Rhodes, Loc.cit.

25 S.C.Ghosal, pp.351-52.

26 J.N.S.I., XXXIII, 1971, p.132.

27 S.C.Ghosal, p.219.

28 Ibid., p.351.

.....

Plate - A
OBVERSE



I



IA



II



III

Plate - B.

REVERSE



I



II



OBVERSE:

IVB

OBVERSE:



IV



III

OBVERSE:



V



IVA



IA

OBVERSE:



VI



OBVERSE:
(ENLARGED)

IVA

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