CHAPTER IV

POLITICAL IMPACT OF MUGHAL CONTACT

ON THE KOCH & AHOM KINGDOMS

It was in the beginning of the 16th century that the Mughals initiated their policy of expansion into Assam. The Koches were the first Assamese power to bear the brunt of this Mughal intervention and as mentioned earlier this was the period when the Koch kingdom reached the height of its power under its ruler Naranarayan and his brother Chilarai. It may also be mentioned that as a result of the alliance formed between the Mughals and the Koches, the Afghan ruler of Bengal was defeated and Bengal came to be divided between the Koches and Akbar the Mughal emperor. However, this glorious epoch of the Koch kingdom soon came to end with the death of Naranarayan and the Koch
state came to be divided into two divisions namely Koch Behar inherited by Lakshminarayan the son of Naranarayan and Koch Hajo which came under the possession of Raghudev the son of Chilarai. Since these two divisions failed to maintain cordial relations hence it paved the way for Mughal intervention in the political sphere. It may be noted that the ruler of Koch Behar submitted to the Mughals and with his help the Mughals were able to conquer as well as to annex Koch Hajo.

In 1616 A.D. Mukarram Khan was formally appointed as the governor of Koch Hajo whereby he made Hajo his administrative headquarter. In Koch Hajo he established a province called Bilayat Koch Hajo. It was then divided into four Sarkars or districts each consisting of a number of Paraganas for revenue collection. Thus the Mughals established their own system of administration. This was followed by the establishment of Mughal political institutions resulting in the growth of Muslim population in the region. This establishment of Mughal political institutions at
the same time resulted in the appointment and importation of many members belonging to the Muslim aristocratic families into Assam and their descendants stayed on in Assam even though Mughal rule was terminated by the end of the 17th century. The Mughal administration in Koch Hajo on Kamrup is indeed a mere replica of their administration in Delhi. It is said that Jahangir deputed one officer named Amir Sheikh Ibrahim Karori from Delhi to supervise the land settlement at Koch Hajo in such a way that it conform to the land settlement at Delhi. Thus Ibrahim Karori introduced the Pargana system in Kamrup. The entire territory of Koch Hajo was divided into 'Sarkars' or districts which was then further divided into a number of Parganas. Jahangir then appointed Kabir Khan a noble of Parikshit as the 'Quanungo' on revenue officer of Koch Hajo. Whereas with regards to the Bilayat Koch Hajo, Karori divided it into four Sarkars namely the Sarkar of Kamrup comprising of Gauhati and Hajo, Sarkar Dekheri or Uttarkul which administered over the territory lying north of the Brahmaputra, Sarkar Dakhinkol having
jurisdiction over the territories lying to the south of the Brahmaputra and lastly Sarkar Bangalkhum. These four Sarkars then came to comprise part of the Bengal Subah or province placed under the control of a Faujdar.

In the year 1661 Aurangzeb dispatched his general Mir Jumla to invade Assam. Mir Jumla’s first encounter was with Pran Narayan the ruler of the Koches. The latter was defeated and Mir Jumla occupied Koch Behar. He then renamed the capital as ‘Alamgirnagar’ whereby he got constructed a mint and coins were issued in the name of the Delhi emperor. Added to this the entire territory of Koch Behar was placed under a Faujdar equipped with 1400 cavalry and 2000 Musketeers who was also assisted by a Dewan and two Amirs. Meanwhile Mir Jumla was bent on recapturing Kamrup or Koch Hajo from the Ahoms. He therefore sent two messengers to the Ahom court asking the Ahom ruler to surrender Kamrup but the latter refused. Hence Mir Jumla advanced further into Assam and within a period of five months he
conquered and occupied Koch Hajo or Kamrup. Immediately after occupying Kamrup Mir Jumla established several military outposts at Kamrup so as to maintain the line of communication with Bengal and to enable him to check Ahom raids and to retain his hold over the conquered territories. Some of these outposts were entrusted to the care of officials known as Faujdars, for example, in Gauhati Muhammad Beg was the Faujdar and at Kaliabor the Faujdar was Sayyid Nasiruddin Khan. Similarly in some of these outposts Mir Jumla appointed other officers known as Thanedars such as Ataullah at Joghigopa, Hasan Beg at Kajali, Sayyid Mirza at Samdhara, Ali Beg at Dargaon, Anwar Beg at Gajpur, Mir Nurullâh at Trimolani and Muhammad Muqim at Namdang. He then made Lakhau a naval and military base placed under the change of admiral Ibn Hussain who was assisted by several officers and Zamindars of Bengal for the purpose of checking the growth of Ahom power. For the purpose of realizing higher amount of revenues the Mughals introduced the system of the classification of lands in Kamrup according to the nature of their
produce. Hence lands came to be classified into three categories namely ‘Kheraj’ or taxed land which comprised of the ordinary, cultivating tenure, the ‘Nisf Kheraj’ or half assessed tenure and the ‘La Kheraj’ or revenue free tenure. The Kheraj lands were further subdivided into the Palaj, Parauti chasar and Banjar. Added to this the Mughals also created a class of officers entrusted with the work of land assessment and revenue collection. Notable among them were the Talukdars, Patwary, Choudhury, Thakuria, Mena etc.

As has been mentioned earlier, the Mughal occupation of Kamrup brought the Mughals into direct conflict with the Ahoms who had then extended their power up to Kamrup. The Mughals occupied the Ahom capital Gargaon for a short period. As a result of these varying conflicts between the Mughals and the Ahoms a treaty was concluded in the year 1639 A.D. thereby fixing the river Barnadi in the north of the Brahmaputra and the Asurar Ali on the south as the boundary between the Mughals and the Ahoms.
This resulted in the settlement of Muslim population in the conquered territories and Gauhati and Hajo became the important trading centres of the Mughals.\textsuperscript{21} There was no doubt a steady increase of Muslim population at Gargaon for Assamese Chronicles maintained that during the reign of King Pratap Singha his general Momai Tamuli Barboruah established new villages throughout the kingdom and settled Muslim families in them.\textsuperscript{22} This record is corroborated by the record of Shihabuddin Talish which mentioned that during this period there were innumerable number of Muslim settlers at Gargaon the Ahom capital.\textsuperscript{23}

It may be mentioned that during Mir Jumla's Assam invasion the Ahoms initially secured success whereby they defeated the Mughals whose forces were taken as war captives and as I.A. Gait has maintained the leaders were settled at Silpani and other places and were given land and slaves while the ordinary soldiers of the Mughals were distributed as slaves to the various Ahom nobles such as the Baruas and Phukans.\textsuperscript{24} Meanwhile Mir
Jumla after occupying Gargaon he struck coins in the name of Aurangzeb and constructed a mosque at Mancachar in Goalpara. Shihabuddin Talish mentioned that after occupying Gargaon the Mughals acquired several valuable articles comprising of 82 elephants, 3 lakh of rupees in cash, 1343 camel swivels, 1200 Ramchangis, 675 pieces of artillery, 6750 matchlocks, 340 maunds of gunpowder and over a thousand boats and 137 store houses of paddy each containing 10 to 100 maunds of grain. Mir Jumla stayed on at Gargaon for a period of one year and selected Mathurapur a place situated seven miles South East of Gargaon as the place for his residence. He was said to have occupied about one hundred villages situated in between Mathurapur and Gargaon and established outposts in these conquered territories. Hence this expedition of Assam by Mir Jumla was significant in the sense that it not only marked the entry of the Muslims into the territory of the Ahoms for the very first time which culminated in their occupation of Gargaon and though Mir Jumla did not introduce Mughal administration in Gargaon as was the case in Kamrup.
Nevertheless he arranged for police administration during his stay at Mathurapur. However, it is noteworthy to mention that this expedition resulted in the drainage of large treasures from Assam for as maintained by Shihabuddin, Talish, by exhuming the graves of dead Ahom princes and nobles (Maidams) Mir Jumla secured property worth 90,000 rupees besides the sacking of notable temples such as Kamakhya, Luna, and Dergaon.28

After the conclusion of the treaty of Ghilajarighat on 1663 Mir Jumla return to Delhi and it is said that on his return a number of Muslim families called Khanikars or craftsmen were settled by the Ahom king in the region lying seven miles from Gargaon.29

Meanwhile the decline of the Mughal rule in Delhi encouraged the Ahoms to assert their power in Assam and hence there took place the battle of Saraighat in 1671 whereby the Mughal forces under the leadership of Raja Ram Singha of Amber were completely defeated. These Ahom Mughal conflicts of the
17th century were significant in the sense that it compelled the Ahoms to secure the cooperation of the neighbouring tribal and feudal powers of the north east such as Koch Behar, Jayantiya Darrang and Cachar. This resulted in integrating and unifying the Assamese society. At the same time the Ahom success over the Mughals, raised the prestige and integrity of the Ahoms in the eyes of the other smaller ethnic groups. Thus the Ahoms came to emerge as the saviour of the north east. At the same time these repeated conflicts between the Ahoms and the Mughals no doubt resulted in increased migration of Muslim population through the settlement of war of war captives in the region by the Ahom rulers. These Muslim settlers have came to identify themselves with the region in which they are settled in and in a way it culminated in Hindu-Muslim unity in the succeeding centuries. In this period of Ahom Mughal conflicts the Muslim settlers were said to have joined hands with the Assamese people against the Mughal invaders. Mention may be made of a Muslim commander Ismail
Siddiqi alias Bagh Hazarika who was said to have fought on the side of the Ahoms against the Mughals in the battle of Saraighat.\(^{31}\)

Immediately after the battle of Saraighat the Ahom kingdom became a scene of conspiracies and political disorder. This encouraged the Mughals to extend their sway over lower Assam and in spite of the fact that they were able to occupy Gauhati nevertheless their policy of expansion was checked by the accession of Gadadhar Singha to the Ahom throne. He fought against the Mughals and defeated them at the battle of Itakhuli in 1682 A.D. This battle once and for all put to a stop Mughal aggression into the region.

After the battle of Itakhuli the Ahom administration was restored in the conquered territories Gadadhar Singha during his period of exile in Kamrup became acquainted with the Mughal system of land revenue and land survey and their various advantages. Hence on ascending the Ahom throne he introduced a
detailed land survey for the whole country. The local Chronicles mentioned that Gadadhar Singha imported Mughal surveyors from Koch Behar and Bengal for the purpose of surveying the entire territory of the Ahom kingdom. Hence the Pargana system in Kamrup which came under the Ahom rule in the latter part of the 17th century was introduced by the Mughals, the Ahoms instead of abolishing it, mixed it with the Paik system which was then prevalent in the region, in such a way as to meet their administrative requirements. Hence Kamrup came to be divided into 26 Parganas each entrusted to the charge of an officer called Choudhury who was assisted in revenue collection by several other officers such as Thakurias, Talukdars, Patgiri, Gaon Kakati on Kholar Kakati whose duty was to calculate the revenue paying Paiks and to assess the amount to be paid as revenue by them. Meanwhile all revenue officers were subordinated to the office of the Bar Phuban with Gauhati as to headquarters and whose control extend over the areas of modern Dhubri and Rangamati, Darrang
and the petty chiefs ruling over the territories extending from Kamrup to Nagaon district.  

This contact between the Ahoms and the Mughals paved the way for the increased importation of Muslim population into Assam in the succeeding centuries. The cessation of conflicts between the Ahoms and the Mughals enabled the Ahom monarchs to consolidate their position and to improve the administration. As a result of circumstances brought about by these recurring conflicts the Ahom kings were forced to utilize the talents and services of the various war captives and other Muslim settlers in the region for intensifying the country's defence potential according to the need of the time. There is every possibility that for the purpose of securing sincere services from these Mughal war captives and personnel the Ahom monarchs must have treated them at par with the indigenous people.
Another significant aspect of the process of internal reorganization of the Ahoms was the appointment and employment of expert Muslim artisans and craftsmen to various responsible jobs by the Ahom monarchs. Among them mention may be made of falconry which acquired an important place among the sports and pastimes of the Ahom monarchs. This sport was also an important pastime of the Mughals.\(^{36}\) In Assam the game was said to have been introduced during the period of Pratap Singha the Ahom ruler whereby the war captives fighting under Sayyid Abu Baqr were appointed by Pratap Singha to train hawks and were placed under an officer called Senchowa Barua.\(^{37}\) The accession of Rudra Singha to the Ahom throne marked the termination of the policy of isolation followed by the previous Ahom rulers. This contact with the Mughals introduced the people of Assam to various novelties of Mughal India for which they became attracted and at the same time they became anxious to learn more about them. Thus Rudra Singha the Ahom ruler began to send envoys to different parts of the country for the purpose of
gathering information about the socio-cultural and political situations of these regions. Hence it resulted in the inculcation of these social and cultural traits of the Mughals by the Assamese people.

Rudra Singha as mentioned earlier was highly interested in cultural pursuits hence he was said to have invited many Muslim artisans and learned men from different parts of Mughal India to settle in Assam. Notable among these Muslim settlers were the royal engravers or Akharkatiyas who were engaged in the task of inscribing Royal Furmans or orders on metal sheets and stone slabs. The head of this branch was probably called a Barua. There are still several Muslim families in Assam who claimed their descent from such Mughal nobles such as those of Julfikar Barua alias Bahadur Gaonburah who participated in the revolt of 1857 and exiled by the British to Kalapani. Similarly the Muslims were also appointed to transcribe interpret and decipher the Persian documents sent from capitals like Delhi and Dacca to the
Ahom rulers as well as to draft letters for the Ahom rulers to these foreign lands. These were known as the Persi Parhias or Persian transcribers. The Assamese Chronicles recorded that Pir Muhammad a Mughal Pir came to Assam along with Ajan Pir during the reign of Gadadhar Singha and settled in Sibsagar and was employed by the Ahom ruler for interpreting and translating Persian letters for the latter.

Because of the fair treatment meted by the Ahom rulers towards the Muslim population, these Muslim settlers of Assam were said to have displayed true love and patriotism for the country they adopted as their home. Therefore they not only commanded the confidence of the Assamese royalty in particular and the Assamese people in general but they were also able to secure high positions in the Ahom state which thus inspired their descendants to accept the region as their home. It may be noted that many of these Muslims served in the royal arsenals of the Ahom kings. They were known as the ‘Dadhora’ or armour
bearers or bodyguards of the Ahom kings and nobles. The Assamese Chronicles mentioned about one Rupai Dadhora who was an influential armour bearer of the Ahom king Gadadhar Singha.\(^{44}\) Added to this there were also many Muslim officials holding important posts in the civil and military departments comprising of the posts of Boras, Saikias or Hazarikas and also that of the Baruas. The account of the late Assamese poet Mafizuddin Ahmed Hazarika relate how one of his forefathers Bagh Hazarika held the command of one thousand unit men which is equivalent to 4000 men under the Assamese general Lachit Barphukan.

This gradual growth of the Muslim population in Assam and their employment in various governmental services by the Ahom rulers facilitated in bringing the people of the region face to face with the various innovations and developments witnessed in other parts of Mughal India. This went a long way in influencing all aspects of the life of the people of the region in the subsequent
periods. Notable inculcation of Mughal influences could be seen in the social, economic and cultural life of the people which are dealt in more detail in the subsequent chapters.

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11 Kamrupar Buranjī, pp. 31, 131.

Assam Buranjī, Gunaviram Barua, Gauhati, 1972, p. 6.


D. Nath, op. cit., p. 103.

12 Kamrupar Buranjī, pp. 31.

M. Neog, Prachya Sasanawali, p. 222.

13 Assam Buranjī, pp. 157, 161.

Kamrupar Buranjī, pp. 75, 80.

14 Kamrupar Buranjī, pp. 32.


E.A. Gait, op. cit., p. 135.

15 Kamrupar Buranjī, pp. 31.


E.A. Gait, op. cit., p. 135.


E.A. Gait, op. cit., p. 135.


18 W. Robinson, op. cit., 282.

M. Saikia, op. cit., p. 31.

19 Kamrupar Buranjī, pp. 31.


Assam Buranjī, pp. 42-43.


E.A. Gait, op. cit., p. 118.

S.K. Bhuyan, Atan Burgohain and his Times, Gauhati, 1957, p. 32.

21 Kamrupar Buranjī, pp. 42-43.

E.A. Gait, op. cit., p. 118.

S.K. Bhuyan, op. cit., p. 32.

D. Nath, op. cit., p. 156.

22 Deodhai Assam Buranjī, (reprint), Gauhati, 1962, p. 130.
Satsari Assam Buranji, p. 77.

E.A. Gait, op.cit., p. 149.

24 E.A. Gait, op.cit., p. 114.

E.A. Gait, op.cit., p. 134.
Blochmann, JASB, Vol. IX, Series IV, p. 78.

E.A. Gait, op.cit., p. 134.

27 Kamrupar Buranji, p. 62.
Padshah Assam Buranji, Gauhati, 1935, pp. 95, 97.
S.K. Bhuyan, Atan Burgohain and his Times, pp. 26, 32.
E.A. Gait, op.cit., pp. 135, 137.

28 Blochmann, JASB, 1872, loc.cit.
E.A. Gait, op.cit., p. 149.


Assam Buranji, Gunaviram Barua, p. 95.


32 Assam Buranji, Gunairam Barua, p. 90.
E.A. Gait, op.cit., p. 170.

33 Assam Buranji, op.cit., p. 90.
E.A. Gait, op.cit., p. 170.

34 Kamrupar Buranji, p. 31.

35 Kamrupar Buranji, p. 31.
S.K. Bhuyan, Swargadeo Rajeswar Singha, p. 245.
W. Hamilton, op.cit., p. 18.

36 Kamrupar Buranji, p. 31.
Assam Buranji, Gunairam Barua, pp. 96, 119f.
Satsari Assam Buranji, p. 199.
W. Hamilton, op.cit., pp. 18, 27.

37 P. Spear, India Paristan and the West, p. 87.

39 Assam Buranji, p. 38.
Assam Buranji, Gunairam Barua, p. 79.
E.A. Gait, op.cit., p. 110.
40 Tungkhunia Burangi, p. 32.
S.K. Bhuyan, Swargadeo Rajeswar Singh, p. 93.
E.A. Gait, op.cit., p. 181.
41 Tungkhunia Burangi, p. 31.
Satsari Assam Buranji, p. 149.
E.A. Gait, op.cit., p. 181.
42 S.K. Bhuyan, Swargadeo Rajeswar Singha, p. 166.
Satsari Assam Buranji, p. 57.
43 Satsari Assam Buranji, p. 131.
44 Satsari Assam Buranji, p. 149.
S.K. Bhuyan, Swargadeo Rajeswar Singha, p. 166.