Kacharis in Northern Bengal

North Bengal was predominantly mongoloid in ancient times. The thinly distributed populace of the region had similarities with the Kacharis of modern times. In the words of Dr. S.K. Chatterjee, "... North Bengal as much as Assam as having an Indo-Mongoloid population from quite early times. Brahman and other western Hindu settlements in North Bengal appear to have been scanty, and it has been mainly during the recent centuries that Brahmins and 'caste Hindus' have felt attracted to North Bengal districts like Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur, Rangpur and the state of Koch Behar. The masses of the North Bengal areas are very largely of Bodo origin .... " These original masses are now extinct almost totally. Most of them had become Koch in the medieval epoch and the others embraced the Islamic creed propagated of the Muhammadan imperialists. The history of North Bengal is attempted below from this ethnic base ground.

Proximity to Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal and China proved to be matters of significance in the early history of North Bengal. The Tibetans, Bhutias, and most of the populace of Sikim and
Nepal are mongoloid. The tongues of the Bhutias, the Newars of Nepal and the distant Tibetans are related to Bodo the languages of the Kacharis. In the Chapter II it has been referred that North Bengal was suitably connected with Bhutan and Tibet through a number of mountain passes. The valley of the Brahmaputra was nearby. Hence the progenitors of the Kacharis entered in this region from the north as well as from the East. It further appears that even after stabilising their hegemony in the North Bengal they maintained terms cultural as well as commercial with the mongoloid world of China, Tibet and Bhutan. This predominance of theirs remained forceful in the region till the dawn of the medieval epoch.

The fertile river irrigated soil led to the birth of an agrarian culture. The numerous rivers and streams viz. Tista, Dharla, Dudkosi, Kangkhai, Menchi, Torsha, Mahananda and many others sheltered petty river valley civilisations on their banks. Fertile land, wide and plenty abundant in the North Bengal received the name, Ha Bangla (meaning wide and plenty land) from the progenitors of the Kacharis as it has been referred in the previous chapter. Sericulture supplemented this agrarian economy quite in parallel to the valley of the Brahmaputra. The inhabitants were export in the growing and manufacturing of forest products of various types medicinal plants and timbers.

A rich cultural atmosphere began to emerge from a very crude primitive pattern. The progenitors of the Austric speaking
tribals of the present day, i.e., the Khasi Jayantias of Meghalaya and Kolmundas of central India who were holding hegemony in the North Bengal were overpowered. These Austro speaking tribals of mixed ethnic character left their marks on the culture of the Kacharis before their final disappearance. Snake worship was popular among the Austrians in those days. The Austro speaking Khasis even today worship a gigantic snake which they call Thlen. From them the Kacharis learnt snake worship. The Rabha section of the Kacharis were known for their veneration to a monster like snake after their manner. Tree worship too, was an usage of the Austrocs, and from them the Kacharis imitated to worship their chief deity Bathow (Siva) through the Sizu (Euphorbia) tree. Snake and tree worship were identical, and became extremely popular among the Kachari populace of North Bengal. The cult of Manasa, the Hindu goddess of serpents originated among the Bengali populace as a consequence.

An image of Manasa unearthed in Rajsahi throw interesting light in this regard. The image is decorated above its shoulders on both sides with the representations of Sizu plants, the emblem of Bathow (Siva) of the Kacharis. The image (made of metal) is as old as of tenth to twelfth centuries A.D. This is an illustrative example of an intermixture of tribal beliefs with the Hindu iconography of Northern Bengal.

These aboriginal Kacharis of Northern Bengal had terms with the inhabitants of Nepal, Sikim and Bhutan. Lepchas,
Jimdars and Rais of Nepal had free access to the plains of Northern Bengal on the basis of ethno linguistic affinities. Since the days of antiquity the Kiratas (Kacharlis) had political supremacy in Nepal and in its neighbourhood. It has been mentioned before that the Newars of Northern Nepal still speak in Tibeto-Burman language. Terms of relationship was commercial with Bhutan. The Bhutias were the largest purchasers of one particular Kachari silk, i.e., \( r \). This silk trade enjoyed a flourishing age upto the second half of the nineteenth century A.D. Bhutan was a largest supplier of silver and ponies in the medieval epoch. Ponies were imported from Bhutan for purposes of sale in the markets of Bengal. Minhaj uddin mentioned that in the cattle market of Lakshmawati in Bengal ponies from Koch Behar were brought. Caravans of horses were the means of communications used by the Bhatia traders. These traders travelled upto Rangpur (now in Bangladesh). Sometimes there were bitternesses too. When such bitternesses took serious turns there were battles. Kachari folklore of western Assam still bear remembrances of such conflicts with the Bhutias. Even to day traders from Bhutan frequent the markets and fairs of North Bengal and the adjoining tracts of western Assam annually. In ancient times such occasions were many times more and was conductive to ethnic admixtures by intermarriages and assimilations of either peoples. Pemberton writes, the Bhutias had the habit of taking away people from Assam for the purpose of their union with inferior womenfolk of their own ranks and were made to serve as slaves in Bhutan.
North Bengal was also a supply base from where the products of the aboriginal Kacharis of Assam were exported up to the Gangetic Valley and Afghanistan.\(^{15}\)

The Kacharis and their cognates enjoyed their predominance till the dawn of the medieval epoch. The first onslaught to their culture came from the side of the Hinduised tribal dynasty of Koch Behar. The Koch Behar kings were no doubt originally Kachari but after their conversion they became active patrons of Hindu culture and religion. Their subjects too, followed the line and gradually broke away from the traditional tribal life pattern.\(^{16}\) Ruling kings entered into matrimonial relations with notable natives states of British India and came to be regarded as Kshatriyas. At one time to pandits of Benaras had recognised the Rajbansis (followers of Koch Behar kings) as kshatriyas in order to discourage them to embrace other religions.\(^{17}\)

The second onslaught came from the Muhammadans which the Koch Behar kings failed to check effectively inspite of their best efforts. Islam made so much influence among the masses that conversion followed in large scale. The Muhammadans of the districts of Rajshahi, Rangpur and Jalpaiguri are mostly descendants of the aboriginal Kachari tribes, with a little admixture of Dravidian blood; now majority of them are known as Sheikhs.\(^{18}\) Till the beginning of this century these people were expert in the rearing and weaving of silk from cocoons.
Rajsahi and Malda were important centres of silk manufacture from cocoons. Silk manufacturers were both Hindus and Muslims of lower social status. The industry was so profitable that the East India company had established a number of factories for silk manufacture. In 1903-4 these factories turned out 23,000 lbs of raw silk valued 2.1 lakhs manufactured at Malda and exported to Europe. Hence the populace of North Bengal and its neighbourhood were identical with the Kachari masses of Assam. This tradition is now at the point of extinction.

The last onslaught came from the tea garden labourers and other outsiders who flocked into North Bengal during the beginning of this century. In the district of Jalpaiguri there were many villages of the Mech section of the Kacharis. With the opening up of tea gardens in Duars and Terai many outsiders came to Bengal as labourers and cultivators and their villages grew up in the proximity of Mech localities; consequently the Mechies moved to Assam from Koch Behar and Jalpaiguri.

These aboriginal masses of Northern Bengal were the creators of civilisation. Paddy culture and sericulture were introduced by them in Bengal. The cult of Mansa, the goddess of serpents worshipped by the Bengalees and a number of Assamese speaking communities of the valley of the Brahmaputra was imitated after the usages of the Kacharis as it has been pointed out before. In the domain of language too, the Bengali dialects of Northern Bengal is indebted to 'Bodo' the language of the Kacharis. Dr S.K. Chatterjee is a
forerunner of this linguistic thought, and he says that certain grammatical structures of the Bengali of Western Bengal had imitated certain essentials from Bodo or Kachari. But it is unfortunate that our knowledge on the dynastic history of North Bengal is still imperfect. For the purpose a brief analysis of the dynastic history of the region is attempted here.

Brief dynastic History

Nothing is known with cent percent accuracy about the political exploits of the Kacharis of Northern Bengal known as Kiratas in ancient times. In the Kishkindhya Kanda of the Ramayana there is reference to a kingdom known as Pundra along with a number of principalities of Eastern India. The kingdom of Pundra has been identified with modern North Bengal by Dr. R.C. Mazumder where a Non-Aryan king Vasudeva laid the foundation of a strong kingdom. Vasudeva made friendship with Jarasandha, the Non Aryan king of Magadha, who figured prominently in the great epic the Mahabharata.

Political history of North Bengal is obscure in the past epic period. Yogini Tantra a Sanskrit chronicle of tenth century A.D. mention about a Koch country not far off from Kamarupa where a king Benusingha by name was powerful. The Koches, inhabitants of this Koch country (modern Koch Behar district of North Bengal) were a mongoloid tribe of Bodo (kachari)linguistic
group with an admixture of Dravidian blood. Still we donot know much details of this king Benu Singha and his successors.

The tribal chiefs were formidable in the region evidently due to two factors. First, the Mlechha Kings of Kamarupa were friendly to the tribal chiefs of Northern Bengal due to their common ethnic entity on which a reference is planned in the Chapter Secondly, the hold of the Pala rulers of Bengal over its Northeast frontiers were uneffective.

This state of conditions eventually produced an upsurge among the Indo-Mongoloid Kachari tribes in the entire region and slowly but steadily they figured themselves as the masters of the political destiny of the North Bengal by the tenth century A.D. Constant contacts between the Kachari tribes and their counterparts of Tibet and Bhutan have already arrested our notice. In 966 A.D. a fresh horde of mongoloids made a fresh thrust in this tract. They got support and encouragement from the Kachari tribes of the region.

One Gandapati of the Kamboja family was the leader of this mongoloid hordes. In the Dinajpur copper plate inscription of this Gaudapati of the Kamboja family a reference of this expedition is found recorded. This pillar inscription is dated 888 Saka equivalent to 966 A.D. According to Nepali tradition, says Mr R.P.Chanda, the term Komboja desa may mean Tibet. His followers were allied to the Kachari tribes and they subsequently were absorbed within the fold of the Koches of North Bengal of whom we have made a slight reference before.
The epithet Gaudapati conclusively warrants our opinion that this adventurer of Tibet had consolidated his authority over a large tract of Bengal with his strong hold in the vicinity of Dinajpur, since the literal meaning of Gaudapati is master of Gauda i.e. Bengal. Probably after making himself master of North Bengal he erected a Siva temple in his kingdom and commemorated his victory by inscribing an inscription referred hereto. No more details are available about the descendants of Gaudapati.

It appears that other batches of mongoloids of Bodo (Kachari) linguistic groups also penetrated in the plains of North Bengal sometime before or after Gaudapati's exploits. They were the Garos, the ethno-linguistic cognates of the Kacharis of the North East India. According to their own legend the Garos believe that they came from Tibet. Under two of their leaders Jappa-Jalinpa and Sukpa Bongipa they left Tibet and established petty settlements in Koch Behar. From Koch Behar they moved further east and founded another principality near Jugighopa (in Goalpara district of Assam) where they ruled for a long period of four hundred years, prior to their final migration in the Garo hills district of modern Meghalaya. It is practically an absurdity to measure the degree of authenticity of this Garo tradition. But it seems that from or after tenth century A.D. the Garos and other mixed Bodo Kachari tribes viz. the Rabhas and Hajongs were factors of importance so far as the political destiny of the than North Bengal is
concerned. Utilising this congenial atmosphere an enterprising Kachari Youth known as Bisu laid the foundation of a formidable Koch Kingdom in the North Bengal in the fifteenth century A.D. Let us now look back to this chapter of their history.

The Koch Behar chronicle "Darrang Raj Vamsavali" have depicted Bisu as an Aryan. But the more reliable and authentic sources, the Buranjis of the Ahoms record his Kachari origin. According to the Deodhai Asom Buranji Bisus father Haria Mandal was a Mech or a Kachari Chief of the village Chikan gram of Goalpara district of Assam, while his mother Hira was a daughter of a Hajong (Kachari tribe) chief of the present Kamarupa district. With his superior knowledge in politics and warfare Bisu was successful to carve out a kingdom in North Bengal where he ruled from 1515 to 1540 A.D. After his coronation Bisu and most of his Kachari followers, embraced Hinduism and henceforth he came to be known as Bisva Singha.

Bisva Singha’s son and successor Nara Narayan (1540-1584) was the celebrated of all Koch Kings. His crowning achievement was his successful victory over the mighty Ahoms of Assam. According to Ain-I-Akbari he built up an alliance with the Mughal Emperor Akbar. To the further south East, the kings of the Tipperas, Jayantias and Kacharis suffering defeat acknowledged him as their overlord. In his career of Empire building his younger brother and commander in Chief Chila Rai was instrumental.
When this brave general Chilla Rai died in the midst of a fresh campaign against the Afgan Sultan of Bengal, Koch kingdoms prospect was doomed.  

Immediately after his fathers death Baghudev, son of Chilla Rai rebelled against his uncle Nara Narayan. Aged and kind hearted monarch Nara Narayan in order to maintain the stability of his empire from more serious disasters had reluctantly agreed to divide it between him and his nephew. Accordingly the river Sankosh became the dividing line of the two portions of the Koch Behar kingdom. The western portion of that river was retained by Nara Narayan for himself and his successors, while Baghudev became the king of the eastern tract under formal sovereignty of Nara Narayan.

These two portions of the Koch kingdom witnessed varied fortunes at different epoches of history. In the eastern tract, the successors of Baghudev ruled upto 1725 A.D. when the kingdom ceased to exist. Baghudev died in 1603 A.D. and was succeeded by Parikshit Narayan (1603-1613 A.D.) Bali, alias Dharma Narayan (1613-1637 A.D.), Mahendra Narayan (1637-1643 A.D.), Chandra Narayan (1643-1660 A.D.), Surya Narayan (1660-1682 A.D.), and Indra Narayan (1682-1725 A.D.).

In the western tract, the successors of Nara Narayan continued to rule as vassals of the Mughals with their capital at Koch Behar, and again became independent during the weak
rule of the Mughals. Incidentally it may be mentioned here that Lakshmi Narayan (1584-1622 A.D.) son and successor of Nar Narayan had feuds with his uncle Raghudev and his son and successor Parikshit Narayan, the king of the eastern tract. In order to stabilise his own position, Lakshmi Narayan in 1596 A.D. declared him as a vassal of the Mughals and in 1597 A.D. he gave his daughter's marriage to Raja Man Singh, the Mughal Governor of Bengal.\(^43\)

Lakshmi Narayan's son and successor Bir Narayan (1622-1633 A.D.) ruled without any important triumph to his credit.\(^44\) Bir Narayan's son and successor Prana Narayan (1633-1666 A.D.) had diplomatic terms with the Ahom monarch Jayadhwaj Singha.\(^45\) Mod Narayan (1666-1680 A.D.) son and successor of Prana Narayan inherited a thorny succession and spent the whole of his reign in hostilities with his relative Mahi Narayan.\(^46\) His reign was inglorious. Vasudev Narayan (1680-1682 A.D.) enjoyed the throne for two years only and was assassinated by the sons of Mahi Narayan.\(^47\) Mahendra Narayan (1683-1693 A.D.) successor of Vasudev Narayan was a bachelor, and so with his death the royal line of Koch Behar descended from Bisva Singha thus came to an end.\(^48\)

Bupa Narayan (1693-1714 A.D.) son of the minister Mahi Narayan than usurped the throne and ruled up to 1714 A.D.\(^49\) His successors were Upendra Narayan (1714-1763 A.D.) and Devendra Narayan (1763-1765 A.D.)\(^50\) It is said that Devendra Narayan was assassinated by a Brahmin.\(^51\) The political history of the Koch
Behar kingdom received a rude jolt during the reign of Dhairjendra Narayan (1765-1783 A.D.) successor of Devendra Narayan. It was due to the repeated raids of the neighbouring Bhutia tribes of Bhutan. Frustrated by the raids of the Bhutias, Raja Dhairjendra Narayan sought British protection. Accordingly on the 7th April 1773 A.D. a treaty was signed between the Raja and the East India Company, by virtue of which Koch Behar became a native state under the Company. As we are not concerned with the history of the native states further discussions on the history of Koch Behar is not necessary here.

Kacharis in Eastern Bengal (now in Bangladesh)

Cultural Background

The pushing of the Kacharis in the plains of Eastern Bengal (now in Bangladesh) commenced at a very early date possibly around the Aryanisation of Assam. From their strong holds in the North Bengal it was easier for them to penetrate into the further south following the downstream of the Brahmaputra and Padma. Besides, there were numerous other outlets viz one through the Garo hills district of Meghalaya from the side of the Kamarupa district of Assam and other possibly through the Jayantia hills of the same province. Celebrated geographer Ptolemy was astonished to see the Kirata (Kachari) principalities of Eastern Bengal. He mentioned them as 'Kirphadia' or
the Land of the Kiratas which comprised Sylhet (now in Bangladesh), Tripura and possibly also the portions of the district of Cachar. Tripura and its neighbourhood was known as 'Kirata Desa'.

Linguistic evidences conclusively confirm that the whole of Eastern Bengal from Dinajpur in the North to Chittagong to the south and Rajsahi in the west to Cumilla in the east was predominantly Bodo, i.e., Kachari in speech and culture. Certain place names and Bengali words spoken in various regions of Eastern Bengal testify their Bodo (Kachari) origin. Dr. S.K. Chatterjee says, "In Sylhet, there are a number of place names ending in the element Canga or Cam ... this seems to be the Bodo word for country". Here mention may be made to Laksham near Cumilla, and Bania chong in Sylhet. Bodo, i.e., Kachari word 'Di' meaning water also said to have enriched the vocabulary of the Bengali tongue spoken in eastern Bengal. Such words are Dabor (a pot), Dub (green coconut), Doob (drowning in water for bath), Dingi (a boat). The Aryamised tribal kings of Kamarupa had maintained contacts-cultural and political with the tribal chiefs of Eastern Bengal. Yogini Tantra records that the ancient boundary of Kamarupa was extended upto the Maimensingh district of present Bangladesh. The masses had a predominantly tribal heritage affiliated to the tribal culture of Assam which was Bodo, i.e., Kachari. In Maimensingh an image of the serpent goddess Manasa has been discovered from a village Rasulpur by name, and on both...
sides above the shoulders of the deity, there are representation of two Sizu (Euphorbia) plants. Similar another image of Manasa with the representation of Sizu have also been found at Rajshahi, in the western frontier of Bangladesh which we have seen before. Sizu is the emblem of Bathow (Siva) Goddess of the Kacharis of the Valley of the Brahmaputra. Hence the base culture of Eastern Bengal was predominantly Kachari in ancient times.

The animist Kacharlis were driven out in large numbers from the valley of the Brahmaputra as soon as the land was Aryanised. In the valley of the Brahmaputra their animist culture was under the protection of Siva or Mahadeva. But even after their migration to the sea-shore regions of Eastern Bengal their veneration to Siva continued to survive. The petty kingdoms grew up in Eastern Bengal became champions of Saiva cult. The Kachari kings of Sylhet were Saivites and a temple, known as the temple of Bhuteswara Siva was raised by one of the Sylhet king known as Isana Deva. The kings of the Kachari Kingdom of Harikela (now in between the stretch of territory covered by Comilla and Chittagong in Bangladesh) were Saivites. In their silver coins we trace stamp of Saivism.

As in North Bengal and in Assam, in Eastern Bengal too the aboriginal Kachari masses were the initiators of paddy cultivation and sericulture. Sericulture and cotton cloth
manufacture flourished in Eastern Bengal till the dawn of the present century in the districts of Rajsahi, Rangpur as well as among the tribal masses near the frontiers of Indian territory of Tippera and Bangladesh. The fertile river irrigated soil of the region was suitable for paddy cultivation and other crops. Harvesting festivals were popular among the aboriginal masses. It is said that in the pre-muhammadan epoch Kherai festival was celebrated in Eastern Bengal to please the mother earth for good harvest. In Eastern Bengal this tradition is now lost and Kherai festival is now current only among the Kacharis of the Brahmaputra Valley and the tribals of Tippera.

Near the foot hills of the Indian province of Meghalaya adjacent to Bangladesh, there were enormous growth of forest resources like timber and malabathrum (Tezpat) which had a wide demand in the neighbourhood. Fishing from the marshy regions was probably another occupation and supplemented the agrarian economy substantially. Different devices of fish catching traps such as Langi and Khoka are of Tibeto-Burman origin. The aboriginal Kachari masses allied to the Kacharis were well known for their association with water. In the Harsha Charita of Bana Bhatta we hear that the Kamarupa king Bhaskaravarman had presented two such persons to Emperor Harshavardhana through his envoy Hangsavega. This suggests that these people's association with water were well known outside Eastern Bengal.

The wide and marshy regions were congenial for inland naval transport. The tradition of boat building particularly in
Sylhet was fairly ancient. Timbers were imported from Cachar for boat building.

Social setup was clannish and had matriarchal leanings after a tribal pattern. Women had a place of honour in family as well as in public life which had received the attraction of the rest of India. Rajasekhara's Karpuramanjari contain illuminating references to the Women of Harikela—the Kachari Kingdom of the further south near the shores of the Bay of Bengal. It is referred to them as .... gallant women of the East .... "

This rich cultural basegrounds fostered civilisation and petty kingdoms sprang up in various regions of Eastern Bengal. Of them the kingdoms of Sylhet, Pattikera and Harikela were renowned in ancient times.

Kachari Kingdoms of Sylhet

Sylhet was an important seat of Kachari principalities. Unfortunately the early history of Sylhet is obscure. Yogini Tantra a Sanskrit work of the tenth century A.D. contain a reference to Sylhet. In the Jayantia Buranji, we also notice stray references in this regard. Numismatic and archaeological sources also throw valuable light. Still much things of the early history of Sylhet under Bodo (Kachari) kings is still unknown. All that we know in this regard is that these kingdoms viz. the kingdom of Landa (N.W. Sylhet), Taref kingdom of
south west Sylhet, and the kingdom of Sylhet proper are worth mentioning here.

**Lauda and Taraf**

The kingdoms of Lauda and Taraf were petty principalities.  

**Kingdom of Sylhet Proper**

Regular history of Sylhet may be pushed back to the second half of the sixth century A.D. when a Chutiya (Eastern Kachari) chief 'Krishak' by name established his principality there.  

There is Deori Chutia tradition that one of their clan known as Pator Goyan migrated to the South East with a powerful leader and were not herd of since.

According to sources available to R.M. Nath, the descendants of Krishak ruled in Northern Sylhet for several decades upto 900 A.D. But it seems doubtful, because in the Bhatera copper plate grant of a Sylhet king Isana Deva we find a genealogy of five kings, viz Kharvana or Nava Girvanga, Gokula Deva, Narayana Deva, Kesava Deva and Isana Deva. According to R.L. Mitra a date 1245 A.D. could be deciphered from the illegible numerals of Isana Deva's grant. If we allow 1245 A.D. as the commencing year of Isana Deva's reign, then a period of 345 years is left for the total reigning period of the proceeding four kings, which seems impossible. According to R.M. Nath, in
all seven kings intervened between Krishak and Kharvana (Nava Girvana), and they ruled up to 900 A.D.\textsuperscript{76}

The political history of the kingdom of Sylhet is still a matter of speculation. It is possible that the Hedambial Kacharîs of Dimapur and Maibong were related to the Sylhet kings some way or other. It is evident from the fact that the date of the inscription of Kesava Deva's grant begins with the words Paddava Kulapala Abda followed by numerals.\textsuperscript{77} Pandava Kulapala evidently refers to Bhima the formidable of the Pandavas, the ancestor of the Hedambial Kacharîs. The kingdom was territorially extended up to south Cachar and a portion of Karimganj subdivision of the Indian Territory included there in.\textsuperscript{78} The wide and marshy regions of Sylhet was suitable for naval enterprises and navy was used in war as well as in internal navigation. Nine giant size boats were the pride of the kings of Sylhet.\textsuperscript{79}

In the domain of culture and religion the Sylhet kings proved themselves exceptional. Both the grants of Kesava Deva and Isana Deva are records of gifts of land, houses, slaves etc. one is to Bhateswara Siva mentioned in the first grant as "Lord of Srihatta" donated by Kamala Kanta Narayana, probably a household deity by king Isana Deva.\textsuperscript{80} Kesava Deva encouraged the educated Brahmins of central India to settle in Sylhet and all were given land grants.\textsuperscript{81} Isana Deva constructed a temple of Vishnu on a hillock near Sylhet.\textsuperscript{82}

Sylhet was conquered by the Muslim invader Shah Jalal in 1257 A.D.\textsuperscript{83} The Bhatera plates were discovered from an old brick
built foot on a hillock near Sylhet and broken brick built stairs from below leading to the entrance of the fort existed at the time of the discovery. It is quite possible that Isana Deva, the king regnant in 1245 A.D. as we have seen before had used this fort against the Muhamadens. The subsequent history of Sylhet is obscure and in 1765 A.D. it passed into the hands of the East India Company.

In the domain of culture the inhabitants of Sylhet had terms with the Kacharis of Assam. Jayantia Buranji records that the Kacharis had trade with Sylhet in the late sixteenth century. Rice, silk products and timber were imported to Sylhet from Assam possibly through the Garo hills Jayantia and Cachar. River Surma was navigable and utilised for the transportation of timber from Cachar. Ethno-cultural affinities between the Kacharis and the aboriginal tribes of Sylhet allied to the former gradually lost around the time of the Muhamedan conquest. Since then Sylhet like other parts of Eastern Bengal figured in history as a Bengali dominated land where the Kacharis had no share cultural or political.

Kingdom of Pattikera

In the second half of the first millennium A.D. an Indo-Mongoloid Kachari kingdom emerged in the vicinity of Comilla (Bangla Desh). This kingdom Pattikera by name was fairly large in extent and possibly also included the localities of Sylhet and Maimensingh within its territorial sovereignty.
According to some the Kherai festival of the Bodo Kacharis of the Brahmaputra valley has link with the second Syllable "Kher" of Pattikera. Still today, the tribes of Tripura and the Bodo Kacharis celebrate the Kherai festival though they are separated by many miles of difficult hilly terrains. This is a more or less conclusive point suggesting a missing intercourse between the various Kachari communities. A place near Moinamti hills five miles to the west of comilla is still known as Paitkera or Patikera.

The Kingdom of Pattikera was prosperous and powerful. It was known as the country of the Kalas to the Burmese. One prince of Pattikera had a romantic love affair with a princess of Pagan (Burma). The Pagan king Kyanzittha (1086-112 A.D.) was agreeable, but his minister objected to the marriage and the prince baffled in love committed suicide. If we accept this account an authentic one than we are to conclude that Pattikera survived in Comilla upto the eleventh century A.D. Strangely enough the dynastic chronicles of the Tripura Rajas and the traditions of the Hedambial Kacharis of the neighbourhood, are silent about all these things and their relations with the latter. Evidently we are to believe that Pattikera survived as a weak state in the Eleventh century A.D. and met its extinction in a natural process.

Kingdom of Harikala

The existence of another Indo-mongoloid Kachari kingdom in the Eastern Bengal not far off from Comilla is testified by
the discovery of a number of silver coins found in the Belonia subdivision of Tripura. These are all silver coins representing the figures of bull on the obverse, connecting them with the legend of Siva. Needless to repeat that the Kacharis were associated with Siva since time immemorial. The earliest of these coins were minted possibly in 7th century A.D. according to Dr. B.N. Mukherjee, although on palaeographic grounds, he suggests that a second series of those coins may be dated to even twelfth or thirteenth century A.D.

Nothing definite is known about the exact location of Harikela. The kingdom of Pattikera survived upto the Eleventh century A.D. in the vicinity of Comilla. So the find spots of the Harikela coins at Belonia, very near from Comilla do not testify its location there. It suggests that Harikela flourished some where to the further south and was extend probably upto the vicinity of Chittagong on the shores of the Bay of Bengal. It supports the account of the Kalika Purana that the Kiratas migrated to the sea-shore regions on the wake of the Aryanisation of the Brahmaputra valley. The name Harikela is inscribed on the obverse of the coins found at Belonia. The word Harikela is perhaps a sanskritised form of the Bodo (Kachari) word Nadigal meaning coconut. Coconuts grow abundantly on the sea-shores and it is further suggestive of the extension of Harikela upto Chittagong on the shores of the Bay of Bengal. The exact reasons are not known for which Nihar Ranjan Ray in his Bangalir Itihas opined that this kingdom at one time possible was extended unto Sylhet. Nothing confirmatory is still known about the cause of the extinction of the kingdom.
1. KJK pp 111-112
2. Garos pp 165-166; ROB p.54; also refer Chapter I.
5. Referred in Chapter II.
7. BKMBB p.Introduction.
8. ITB p.9.
11. T.I.N. pp.567-568
13. Folk Songs p.58.
15. It is inferred vide F.N.No. 151 of Chapter I.
16. Referred in F.N. 159 of Chapter I.
21. KJK pp.85-86.
23. HAB p.27.
26. YT. 2, 14:15 Troyodosa Patala Purva Khanda pp.132-134
28. POI.p.42.
30. Ibid. p.Ibid.
31. Ibid. p.Ibid.
32. Ibid. p. ibid.
33. Garos pp.8-9.
34. IG1.Vol.XII Reprint p.175.
35. DRV pp.5-9.
36. DAV p.173; and HAT p.414.
38. AIA p.350.
39. KB p.12.
40. MA pp.206-207.
41. KB pp.13-14.
42. AB pp.188-189.
43. AIA pp.362-663.
44. KB pp.112-137.
45. Ibid pp.69-82.
46. Ibid. pp.112-137; and Br.B.pp.1069-1076, Vol.II.
47. Br.B.pp.1069-1076 Vol.II.
48. Ibid. p. Ibid.
49. Ibid p.Ibid; and KB pp.112-137
50. KB pp.112-137.
51. KBS Revenue pp.234-238.
52. Ibid Ibid.
53. J.B. refers to the trade route to Sylhet (in Bangladesh) through Jayantia (Meghalaya) vide J.B.pp.10-14; from Kamarupa district in Assam there were routes upto Garo hills (in Meghalaya) vide ADG Vol.III p.40.
54. p.65 pp.51-52
55. KJK p.127.
56. KI p.55.
58. ERMBB p. Intro.
59. JASB. Vol.XVI.1940. pp.75.
62. EKSAS p.238; and T. S. Vol.XII No.1, April 1973 p.11.
63. Referred in Chapter II.
64. CHA p.137.
65. HS.C pp.282-287; Hs.c. of Cowell pp.211-215.
68. Y.T. 13-14 Prathama Patala Uttara Khanda pp.203-204.
69. JB pp 10-14.
70. BGOAC pp 113-123; and IGI. Vol.XVI 1908 p.155.
71. Ibid. p.97.
72. Ibid. p.97.
73. Ibid. p.111 Appendix I.
74. JASB Vol.VI. 1940 p.73.
75. Ibid. p. ibid.
76. BGOAC p.111 Appendix I.
77. JASB Vol.VI. 1940. p.75.
78. Ibid. p. ibid.
79. BGOAC p.114.
80. JASB Vol.VI. 1940 p.75.
81. Ibid pp.73-77- the grant records details of land granted
82. BGOAC p.115.
83. HAB p.278.
84. JASB Vol.VII 1940 pp.73-77.
86. JB pp.10-14.
88. IGI Vol.XXI 1908 pp.163-164 ; 227 ; and IGI Vol.XVII
     Reprint p.78 ; and KJK pp.127-128.
89. KJK pp.128-130.
90. Ibid. p. ibid.
91. Referred in FN No.62 of the current Chapter
92. HAB p.280.
93. Ibid.p.279.
94. HCF p.242.
96. Ibid p. ibid.
97. Ibid p. ibid.
98. Ibid p. ibid.