The above investigation gives us an idea about the cult of Siva followed in Assam from unknown past. The cult of worshipping Siva has a long history. Once upon a time it was a most living as well as a flourishing religion of ancient Assam. The tribal people of Assam showed a strong tradition of the cults of linga and yoni by their stone implements. The aboriginal inhabitants practised the cult of Siva before the cult of Devi could supplant it with favourable patronisation of Naraka. As it appears from the K.R., the cult was one of the flourishing religions even during the reign of Naraka. Classical sources inform that Bhagadatta had perhaps patronised the cult of Siva after the death of Naraka. The epigraphs testify that Vajradatta, Mahâbhûta-varman and all other kings reigning from the 5th to the 12th century A.D. patronised Saivism and that during the rule of these kings the cult tended to become a sectarian faith in the name of Mahâesvara-Saivism. The chronicles of the Ahoms and the Koches and the biographies of the Vaishnava saints of medieval Assam also prove to the prevalence
of the cult even after the 13th century A.D., i.e. after the coming of the Ahoms under the leadership of Sukaphā. The available archaeological remains of the 5th-6th century A.D. and also all other remains of ancient and medieval periods discovered and unearthed at present also prove to the widespread prevalence of the cult of Siva in Assam from a remote past. The cult took a Tantrik shape particularly in the days of the Sālāstambha kings. From all these, it appears that the cult was a living religion of ancient Assam.

But at present we do not find an independent cult of Siva. The present from of Saivism is a blending of both Saktism and Vaishnavism. We have elsewhere pointed out that the influences coming from the latter two cults almost smothered the identity of the former. The personification of Sakti in Saivism is one of the causes of diminishing influence of the cult in the society. People identify Siva not as an independent god but as an assimilation of both Siva and Sakti. The Ahom kings, although patronised mass erection of Siva temples throughout Assam, gave importance only to Sakti, for which we find a separate class of Sākta literature. However, according to the notion that Siva and Sakti are two united deities, it can be seen that Siva is variously described along with Sakti in the Sākta works.

The neo-Vaishnavism propagated by Śaṅkarācārya does not recognise independent identities of all gods other than Viṣṇu, whom the Vaishnavites regard as the Supreme Lord. Siva, says Śaṅkarācārya, is a god but not an independent god. He cannot grant liberation to the souls. It appears from the Vaishnava literature of Assam that Siva is a part of Hari and Viṣṇu and he is portrayed in all the works of Vaishnavism as a great Viṣṇava, who like all other devotees is greatly absorbed in the meditation of Hari. Thus Siva is given a minor position in the Vaishnava

1. महापुरुष सीशाकरदेव (द्वितीय ) व 1615.
literature of Assam. This is another cause of extinction of an independent Saivism in Assam.

Another cause of diminishing influence of the cult is that it remained all through its evolution as a temple cult. Still it remains as a cult thriving within the precincts of the temples. In no period of history it came out of the enclosures of the temple and still it remains only in the temples.

From our investigations in the present work it also appears that the system of Saivism which flourished in Assam was none but Saiva-Tantrikism or Tantrik-Saivism. The traditional rulers of Assam were said to have followed Mahavara-Saivism. The kings of the Gupta period practised Mahesvara-Saivism. But the system of Mahesvara-Saivism flourished in Assam was different from that of the system prevailed in other parts of India. In Assam the system got blended with Tantrikism. It is evident from the epigraphs bearing Tantrik sign अज्ञ at the commencement. History proves that Saiver-काे क य रण न क त in Assam as early as the 9th century A.D. It is evident from the chronicle of the Ahoms and the kones and also from the biographies of the Vaishnava saints that Tantrik-Saivism was a religious tenet of the people of Assam even in the medieval period.

These philosophical speculations of the religion which thrived in the province also point to the existence of Tantrik Saivism. According to Tantrikas, Siva and Sakti are two principles of one non-dual Supreme Being. The 2. and the Y.T. have asserted this advaita philosophy and have expounded the abstract theosophy and the Being as being two in manifestation. The Aranyavatśvara aspect of the Saity reveals the monistic philosophy of two unified principles and this aspect is
Unquestionably Tantrik. The Stava 3 found in the Tantra of Assam Burahjí reveals the peculiarity of Saivism peculiar to Assam and narrates that in Assam Shiva stays always along with Parvatī. The A. K. 4 and the Y.T. 5 also have pointed to this peculiarity.

Dividing the Siva temples in the modern district of Kamarupa, K. L. Barua refers to the Siva temples where Amīśa bhoga or victuals consisting of meat and fish are offered to invariably in the Arhanārīśvara aspect of Siva. 6 The worship in this aspect is conducted according to Tantrik rites. The Ahom and the Kocha chronicles have narrated also how the kings offered sacrifices to Siva. The Bārāng Bajvanāsāvāli states that Nararāyaṇa was compelled to worship the deity according to tribal modes offering sacrifices, wine and flesh. This suggests to the fact that the tribes of Assam were accustomed in such revolting practices which constituted the features of Tantrikism. A close study of the behaviours of the tribes of Assam would suggest that they were, from yore past, habituated in sacrificing, eating and drinking of flesh and wine, free association both amongst males and females. It is said that Assam was the birthplace of Tantrikism. Tantrikism approves sensuous revolting practices and believes in magic and sorcery. The tribes of Assam do not show apathy to all these and it can be said that the practices of conducting sacrifices, drinking of wine and flesh, in free association between men and women, the belief in magic and incantations prevailing among the tribes of Assam have contributed to the growth of Tantrikism in the province. As such the form of Tantrik Saivism had a reasonable ground for its existence in the province.

3. p 162.
4. 51/82.
5. 2/4/23; 2/5/1.
Siva is a popular deity worshipped by all classes of people. In literature we find Siva portrayed out of group, class and religious consciousness of all the classes of people. He appears to be a composite character manifesting the above consciousness of the people. He appears in three aspects: firstly, a Supreme Being, a yogi and Anyādī pur excellence for the people of upper class, secondly, a poor house-holder god of his followers for the middle class and thirdly, a cultivator for the common folk. These three aspects have made his character composite.

In the end we will dwell on one point more as revealed from our survey. It is observed elsewhere that there are numerous Siva temples in present day Assam. Some of them belong to a remote past, as in the case of Mahākāśirāva at Tezpur, which was constructed by Bānāsura, and other definitely belonged to the Ahom period. We have every reason to believe that the temples belonging to the remote past were originally the flourishing centres of local primitive Saivism. The Aryan priests coming to the land Aryanised them accepting Tantrikism and primitive Saivism into their own fold. Of such acceptance of local cult and temples discussions have been made in proper places. But we should note here that the abundance of temples itself testifies to the widespread prevalence of the cult of Siva from an obscure past. The K.E. of the 10th century A.D. attached eleven places sacred to Siva. In the same way the I.T. (16th century A.D.) also mentions a good number of temples, where Siva in different names resided particularly in his linga form. The same Tantra text evidently refers to the places sacred to the principal male gods as the residing places of Siva and apropos to this, it is worth mentioning that in Assam there was no distinction between Siva and Viṣṇu. As such the temples of Siva outnumbered those of Viṣṇu and Viṣṇi in ancient Assam. Even to this day the number increases day by day with the discovery of new temples or sites of ruined temples in the
forests and hills of Assam. It was a peculiar trait of Siva as depicted in the Assamese literature that he wandered halter-skelter everywhere in the forests and the grave-yards. Perhaps for this trait of his character we find numerous temples enshrining Siva-images and lingas everywhere in the hills and plains of Assam. Although we are not certain whether these temples originally belonged to the non-Aryan people or to the Aryans, but we can say with some air of truth that they belonged to non-Aryan people or at least some of them were definitely influenced by the non-Aryans.

8. भोकेदेवता रिव, p 64.