Kachari Kings established their capital at Khaspur in the middle of the 18th century. The place now is only a village in the Cachar district of Southern Assam. It is situated between longitude 92.15' and 93.15' East and latitude 24.8' and 25.8' North. Cachar the Southern-most district of present Assam, now covers approximately 6,922 square kilometres of territory. The district is bounded on the north by the North Cachar hills district and the state of Meghalaya, on the East by the State of Manipur, on the south by the State of Mizoram, on the west by the State of Tripura and Bangladesh. Bangladesh is now a sovereign state but many parts of this country will have to be referred to in the present narrative. When the British annexed this Kachari Kingdom in 1832 to the Company's dominion in the East, it included the plain areas of modern Cachar, the whole of the present North Cachar Hills district, Nowgang*

* This includes the area of recently created Karimganj and Hailakandi districts. Cachar: 3786 square kilometres, Karimganj: 1809 square kilometres and Hailakandi: 1327 square kilometres. Assam Govt. Diary, 1993.

district and the Jiri Frontier tract of Manipur. The area under Kachari Possession was, therefore, much larger than the present area of Cachar district.

The Kingdom had two distinct geographical features. Its North Cachar Hills area is a continuation of the Assam range, and the plain areas form the eastern extremity of the erstwhile Surma Valley. The Barail Hills or the 'Great Dyke' spreading like a great wall in the east-west direction now separates the Assam Valley or Assam proper from the plains of Cachar. In fact there exists a chain of mountains on the northern side of Cachar of which the Barail range is historically very important in our present narrative. Its various peaks enhance Cachar's natural beauty. They create a deep blue natural background in the North of Cachar. Besides separating the two valleys, the Brahmaputra and the Barak, the Barail Hills make the area picturesque and its aerial view is exceptionally wonderful.

Though the Cachar plain is basically a flat land, yet in its South-eastern frontier lie the Bhuban range, a section of the Lushai Hills, which stretches upto the Barak, the principal


* Hampeopet, the highest peak in Barail range of hills at the height of 6,153 feet above sea level could be seen in open eyes during day time. Its other peaks like Sherfaisip, at a height of 5,617 feet, Jentahajuma, at a height of 5,127 feet and Kalangbar at a height of 4,336 feet above the sea-level. Allen, B.C., Assam District Gazetteer (Cachar) Allahabad, 1905. Pp 2-3

3 Ibid. Pp 2-3
river of the district, and varies from seven hundred to three thousand feet in height above the sea-level. The plain section is also broken up by two long ranges of hills called the Rengti and the Tilain across north and south. A considerable portion of its western part, now Hailakandi district, is covered by Chhatachara range, which has a height of two thousand eighty seven feet above the sea-level. The hills gradually decline in height, and its middle portion called Saraspur, is only one thousand feet, the height diminishes further, to only a few hundred feet, near the river Barak where it is called Badarpur Hills. Almost the whole of the Hailakandi area in the western part of Cachar is dotted with knolls or tillas, which are known as Katlichara, Barunchara, Rupachara, Nunaikhal, Hasinora, Kalachara, Bandukmara, Mohunpur and Rabatabad Hills.

The principal river of the North Cachar Hills, which is now a separate district, is the Doyang. It originates near Mahur on the bank of which once the Kachari Kings built their capital and falls into the Kapili, another important river of the British Central Cachar. On the left bank of the river Doyang, the principal tributaries are the Langyen, the Daloima and the Longai, while on the right bank, the Mahur river has its tributaries—the Mupa and the Langting. Once this entire area was under the Kachari rule.

The principal river, as stated earlier, is the Barak*. Which originates from the Southern slopes of the Naga-Manipur watershed7. It flows in South-West direction, reaches Tipaimukh, and meanders down to the north forming the boundary line between Cachar and Manipur for some miles. The Barak then joins its tributary, Jiri and turning to the West, it passes through the plains of Cachar and reaches Bhanga near Badarpur. From Bhanga down to Haritikar, where the Kacharis once built a temporary capital, the Barak forms the international boundary between the republic of India and Bangladesh. The Barak flows in an extremely 'zig-zag course for which it is called Bara Bakra in the old scriptures. To the west of Haritikar, the river Barak divides into two branches viz, the Surma and the Kusiara. While Kusiara enters Sylhet, a district of present Bangladesh, the Surma flows as far as Jalalpur within the Indian territory and then enters Bangladesh. The total length of the river from its


7. Allen, n.5, (Sylhet) P. 7. Also census of 1951, Assam (Cachar), P. ii
source to its confluence is about 560 miles.

The Important tributaries on the north bank Jiri, Chiri, Madoora and Jatinga originating from the North Cachar Hills unite with the Barak in different places of Cachar plains. Flowing a course of 75 miles from its origin in the North Cachar Hills, the Jiri confluences with the Barak near Jiribam. Chiri, which originates from the southern slopes of the Barail near Haflong ultimately joins the Barak to the west of Lakhipur. The Madoora, on whose bank Khaspur exists, rises from the same range and joins the Barak at Silchar. The Jatinga, the fourth tributary on the north of the Barak, originates from the south of Haflong and, flowing through the hills, reaches Panighat. From there, flowing through Barkhola and receiving the Doloo on its left bank and traversing a course of eighty-six miles, falls into the Barak at Joynagar. The tributary rivers in the south of the Barak are Sonai, Dhaleswari, Katakhal, Rukni, Ghagra and they all originate from the Lushai Hills. The Sonai rises from the Lushai Hills and after northerly course of sixty miles unites with the Barak at Sonaimukh, while Dhaleswari also rises in the same range and falls into the Barak, a little to the west of Badarpur. The Katakhal, a new channel of Dhaleswari, also falls into the Barak near Salchapra. The area between the Sonai and the Katakhal is drained by the Rukni and the Ghagra and they fall into the Barak near Silchar. Allen, B.C. n-5, (Cachar), p. 6-7.
The plains of Cachar is dotted with some haors and beels, while its hills are covered with dense forest and are full of nameless streams.

Evidently, the kingdom was rich in land, forest and water resources. Its land was fertile. This attracted migrants from the Bengal districts under the Sultans and the Hindu Rajas and later under E.I.C.'s rule.

The climate of this valley is characterised by excessive humidity. As the area is almost surrounded by different ranges of hills, the summer heat here is almost unbearable in the months of June and July. The rainfall is extremely heavy and often causes floods resulting in the outbreak of dysentery, cholera and other water-borne diseases. Regular floods during the rainy season is the special feature of Cachar and in the olden days this part of India was known to the up-country Sadhus as a Kachcha land and probably it might be one of the reasons why it came to be known as Cachar. The establishment of the Kachari Kingdom here by the Kachari Kings

* Among the haor, the Chatla swells into a lake like sheet of water during monsoon and its inflated dimension is approximately twelve miles in length and two miles in breadth at the widest part. In addition to this, Bakri haor (10 sq. miles), Bowalia (6 sq. miles), Kakaria Bil (½ sq. mile), Puma (2 sq. miles), Thaphani Bil (4 sq. miles) and Kholang Bil (6 sq. miles). Dubri Bil (1 sq. mile), Koya (1 sq. mile) are no less important, which make the valley green and fertile. Hunter, W.W. n.4., FP 367-359.


* According to Rev. Endle, the Cachari rule gave the district its present name.
which was an incident of only middle 18th century, may not have any connection with the naming of the district as Cachar or Kachar.  

The name of the land differed in different periods. The area has been mentioned as Hairamba Desa in the Mahabharata. It is stated in the epic that a demon damsel named Hidimba lived there and Bhima, one of the five pandavas, while wandering from place to place, arrived there and married her. They had a son by the name Ghatotkoch who in course of time became the first legendary king of this land according to popular belief. The land since then came to be known as Hairamba Desa or the homeland of Hidimba and the same name was used in different works of the later period. The river Barak appears to have been mentioned there as the holy river of Hairamba Desa. The boundary of the Hairamba Desa, as given in the Desavali, a Sanskrit work of A.D. 1728, was extended in the north upto Kamrup and Dharampur, to the east upto the Kingdom of Manipur, to the south upto Manthara, (Madocra ?) and to the west upto Sialtek. Kamakhya Tantra holds the view that Cachar was one of the seven divisions of the Kingdom of Kamrupa and


* Saptakhanda or Seven Divisions were Bindu, Sindhu, Joy, Chandra, Kachcha, Siddhya and Samuk. See, Guha, U.C. n.11, P. 2.
was known as Kachcha territory\textsuperscript{12} The name of the river Surma (Barak) finds mention as Sarabati in the Sanskrit dictionary Amarkosh, which was compiled in between 7th and 8th Century A.D. and present Cachar was mentioned as Pratyanta Desa or a frontier country\textsuperscript{13} In this Pratyanta country, a holy place has been named as Unakuti\textsuperscript{14} As this now falls in modern Tripura, it is reasonable to think that perhaps Cachar was under the Kings of Tripura during the 7th and 8th Centuries.

The early history of Cachar seems to be obscure. It is stated that before the 5th century A.D. Cachar was included in Sylhet\textsuperscript{15} and perhaps it formed a part of the Samatata Kingdom.*

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid, P p 1-2
\item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid, P.2
\item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid, P.4
\item \textsuperscript{15} Bhattacharjee J.B. Glimpses of the pre-colonial History of Cachar, article; studies in the History of North-East India, edited by Bhattacharjee J.B. 1986, P.82.
\end{itemize}

* This territory finds mention in the Allahabad Pillar Inscription of Samudragupta. Its exact limit in the Gupta age is not known. The Brihat Samhita, a work of the 6th century A.D. distinguishes it from Vanga. The narrative in the records of Hiuen Tsang in the next century describes it as a low and a moist country on the sea-side that lay to the south of Kamrup (Assam). It was more than three thousand li, i.e. about 500 British miles in circuit and its capital was about 20 li, i.e. about 3½ miles in circuit. The exact limits of Samatata can not be ascertained, but it may be taken as equivalent to eastern Bengal. Majumdar, R.C., History of Ancient Bengal, Vol. I, 1st ed, 1971, Pp 8-9.
In the 5th Century A.D. Cachar, Sylhet, Mymensing, Chittagong (now all in Bangladesh excepting Cachar) and Tripura were under the Deva rulers of Sylhet. Among the two Bhatera Inscriptions of Sylhet, the first inscription records that Kesava Deva, the reigning Deva monarch, granted lands to the extent of 375 hals (1 hal = 4 acres) of land, 296 houses and a large number of slaves for the adoration of Lord Vatesvara and upkeep of the temple. The area included parts of North and South Sylhet.

In A.D. 1877, two copper-plate Inscriptions were discovered in a mound (tilla) at Bhatera, a village in Sylhet of modern Bangladesh. N.N.Basu, an Indologist said to have told Achyuta Charan Choudhury, author of Srihatter Itibrittya, that the scripts used in the plates are identical with those of the 10th century A.D. R.C. Majumdar observes on paleographical grounds that the plates can hardly be regarded as earlier than the 13th century A.D. A.C.Choudhury, on the other hand, suggests that the plates must be of pre-seventh century A.D. His argument is based on the logic that out of about one hundred villages named in the first plate, only four to five can be identified with modern names of villages, whereas in all the Inscriptions of Sylhet of the 7th century A.D. Village names can be identified with their contemporary names, Bhattacharjhee, J.B., An Early state in Srihattadesa content analysis of the Bhatera Copper-plates, proceedings of the North-East India History Association, 5th Session, Aizawl, 1984, Pp. 13-30. Also Bhattacharjhee, J.B. n.15, P. 82.

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Habiganj and Karimganj and part of the plain areas of Cachar.

Thus the name Cachar occurs in the records of the 5th century A.D. and in support of this claim copper plate inscriptions of Bhatera may be accepted as a primary evidence.

In the sixth-seventh century A.D. Cachar probably came under Varman rulers of Kamrupa. Hiuen-Tsang in his Si-Yu-Ki mentions that the circumference of Kamrup was about 1700 miles and according to Gait this must have included the whole of the Assam Valley, the whole of the Surma Valley, a portion of North Bengal, a part of the Mymensing district and Sylhet of Bangladesh. The Nidhanpur plates of Kumar Bhaskarvarman of Kumrup of 7th century A.D. discovered in the recent years in the present district of Sylhet indicates that Cachar including Sylhet was under the Varman rule. Pandit Padmanath Bhattacharyya Vidyavinod, however, differs from this view and points out that Sylhet was a separate country to the North-East of Samatata and was not tagged with Cachar.

Perhaps following the death of Bhaskarvarman in the middle of the 7th century, A.D. Varman rule declined in Kamrupa, and Cachar along with Sylhet came under the Samatata rule. The Tipperah copper plate grant of Lokenath issued in the 7th century A.D. states that Lokenath, the Saman'a Chief of East

17. Choudhury, Umesh Chandra, some observations on two copper-plate grants from Bhatera Sylhet District, Assam, J.R.A.S.B. Vol. VI 1940, P.75.

Bengal (Samatata), constructed the temple of Vishnu at Subang near Bikrampur. In the seventh century A.D. the Harikela state in East Bengal emerged and lasted up to the 10th century A.D. and perhaps Cachar came under its rule. It is stated in the History of Ancient Bengal that Chandra Kings ruled in the Harikela state in the 9th and 10th century A.D. and this indicate the existence of the Kingdom up to the 10th century A.D. Confusion, however, arose with regard to the exact location of Harikela state. Quoting from the Manjusri Mulakalpa, Dr. Majumdar observes that the State of Harikela, Vanga and Samatata were independent States. Two recently discovered manuscripts, Rudrakhya Mahatya and Rupachinta-manikosh, the latter being a lexicon compiled in the 15th century A.D., indicate that Harikela was the ancient name of Sylhet. Dr. R.C. Majumdar in one of his maps attached to his work History of Ancient Bengal puts a question mark with regard to the existence of Harikela State near Nidhanpur village of Sylhet. The Chinese writer, I-Tsing, and the author of Karpura Manjari (written in the 9th century A.D.) confirm the location of the Harikela State in the eastern extremity of India. A large number of Harikela coins found in different places suggest that it included Sylhet, Cachar, Tripura, Chittagong and other neighbouring districts.


There are written records to justify the view that the political hold of the House of Tripura over Cachar began from the 13th century A.D. It has been stated in Rajmala, compiled in A.D. 1407, that leaving his original homeland in Allahabad, Pratardana, one of the Tripura Kings, came to the east, conquered the Kirata country and established his capital at Trivega on the bank of the river Kapili. Tripura Kingdom is stated to have comprised the entire Kapili valley, the North Cachar Hills and perhaps the plain areas of Cachar. Quoting from Rajmala Barua mentions that about sixteen kings ruled over Trivega Kingdom with its capital on the bank of Kapili river. The Capital at Trivega continued to exist upto the 5th century A.D. Following the death of Trilochan, the father of Drikpati, etc. a dispute arose on the question of inheritance among the princes. Dakshin, the younger of the two princes established his capital at Khalangma in plain portion of Cachar on the bank of the river Barak.


* Khalangma was perhaps the ancient name of Rajghat.

dia, Yakadas Bhai Mili Mantrana Karila, Sainya Sena
Sene Raja Sthanantare gela, Baravakra Ujane
teh Khalangma rahila." Leaving the bank of the river Kapila the King consulted with his eleven brothers and settled himself at Khalangma on the bank of the river Barak with his courtiers and followers. See Barua, K.L., n.25, P.106. Also s.e, Sen, K.P., Rajmala, Dakshin Khanda, P. 36.
The ancient brick buildings, tanks and roads at Rajghat of Sonai near Rukni, a tributary of the Barak river confirms the existence of Tripuri rule in Cachar. The Tripuris of present Tripura still believe that they had their early settlements in Cachar on the Bank of the Rukni river. Existence of some Tripura Punjis in Hatichara near Barkhola thana of the present Cachar district confirms this fact. We have, however, insufficient records about the Tripuri rule in Cachar. Traditions however, indicate that in spite of shifting their capital to Agartala, their political hold over Cachar continued upto the middle of the sixteenth century. Upto the 15th century A.D., Hailakandi area, called Purvakul in Rajmala was under the Tripuri rule including the areas upto Rungrang in the East. The present name of Rungrang is Jirighat which is now a trade centre for the Manipur, Cachar and Tripura merchants. The Tripuri control over Cachar probably came to an end in the 16th century A.D. when Koch general Chilarai invaded the country and established his authority over there.

It appears that the illustrious Koch general, Chilarai, the brother of the Koch king Naranarayana who rebuilt the Kamakhya temple, subdued the Ahoms and Kacharis of Maibong. He

also conquered Manipur, Jaintia and Sylhet and defeated and killed the Tripuri King and installed his brother on the throne on his agreeing to pay an annual tribute of ten thousand rupees in gold mohar and war horses.\textsuperscript{31}

The river Longai was accepted then as the boundary between the Koches and the Tripuris.\textsuperscript{32} Naturally by A.D. 1562 a Koch colony was curved out in Cachar and the Tripuri rulers were driven out. Chilarai's hold over Cachar continued upto A.D. 1745 and the boundary of the Koch Colony in Cachar extended from the borders of the North Cachar Hills to the river Longai in the present district of Karimganj.\textsuperscript{33}

On being instructed by the Koch King, Naranarayana, Chilarai retired to Koch Behar leaving behind a contingent of army at Brahmapur in Cachar.\textsuperscript{34} To administer this conquered territory Chilarai appointed his brother Kamalnarayana* as the governor of Kochpur (Brahmapur) which later came to be known as Khaspur*. A Koch colony was thus established in the plains of

\begin{itemize}
\item[31.] Dutt, Calica Doss, The Koch Behar State, 1903, P. 231.
\item[32.] Guha, U.C., n.11 P.30; It deserves a mention that Darrang Raj, Vamsavali, Purani Assam Buranji and Dr. Wade's "An account of Assam" mention the defeat of the Tripuri King by Chilarai but Tripura Rajmala and Rajaupakhyan remain silent about this. See, Khan: Amanatullah, Koch Beharer Itihas, (Bengali). 1st Vol. 1936, Pp. 111-12.
\item[33.] Bhattacharjee, J.B., n.28, P. 110.
\item[34.] Guha, n.11, U.c., Pp. 30-31.
\end{itemize}

* His name is associated with the construction of 350 miles long road from Koch Behar to Naranarayanapur, during Koch campaigns against the Ahoms. see Gait, E.A., A History of Assam, 3rd ed, (Reprint) 1984, P.51.

* While at Maibong, the Kacharis called the Dehans (Koches) as Khusucha and their capital was known as Khusupur which ultimately came to be known as Khaspur. See Guha, U.c., n.11, P.34.
Cachar and since then the Koches were known as Dehans or Dewans as they were the descendants of Chilarai who acted as the Dewan of Naranarayana. E.A. Gait in his History of Assam mentions that "there is a small colony of people in the Cachar district known as Dehans. These are reputed to be the descendants of some Koches who accompanied Chilarai's army and remained in the country. They enjoyed special privileges in the days of Kachari rule as well and their Chief or Senapati was allowed to enter the King's courtyard in his palanquin.

Kamalnarayana who was appointed Koch governor of Kochpur (Khaspur) was a pious and peace loving person. He invited a few brahmans of Kamrup and appointed them priest and got them settled on the bank of the river Tikal. Simultaneously he also appointed some Koches as devagrihi or sebayat.

Kamalnarayana had divided the entire Koch community in Cachar into eighteen clans on the basis of profession and many of their descendants are still found in Cachar District.


They were Barpatra (Prime Minister), Dekapatra (Junior Minister), Senapati (Commander-in-Chief), Ujir (Judicial Munister/Officer), Rajkaji (Judge), Shyama Bhandari (Incharge of the Estate assigned to Shyamatemple), Kabi Bhuyan (Musicians), Doloi (Spiritual/Religious guide), Deuri (Temple Assistant), Purkait (Writer), Singadar (Trumpeter), Chanadar (Piper), Bagdar, (Harmonist), Kumar Laskar (weapons maker), Bherua Laskar (Drummer), Dhulia Laskar (drummer), Sunapatra (Goldsmith), Bharipatra (Silver and gold merchants.)

Source: Khan, Amanatullah, n.32, P. 237; also Guha, U.C. n.ll, Pp 34-35.
The Koch Supremacy in the North-East India collapsed gradually with the reverses in their Bengal campaigns against the powerful Nawab of Bengal. The process of decline was further accelerated by frequent disturbances created by the Jaintias and other tribes. The Koch territory, therefore, remained confined before Kachari rule to Khaspur alone. So the Kacharis in Maibong undisturbed by the Ahoms and the Koches, got a chance to extend their rule and transfer their capital to the plains of cachar. It is mentioned in the Baharistani Ghaybi that in 1612 the Kachari King of Maibong Yasonarayan (1583-1616) established two strong forts at Pratapgarh (Patharkandi) and Asuritekar (Haritikar) to prevent the Mughal invasion and the Koches had no hold over the territory.

Two Koch governors ruled over Khaspur after Kamalnarayana. The third governor proved himself a tyrant. The nobles then conspired against him and assassinated him. After him, the Koch general Udita was proclaimed the Raja of Khaspur by the people. Udita's seven successors ruled in Khaspur, and they were Bijoy, Dhir, Mahendra, Ranjit, Narsingh and Bhim Singh. The last ruler Bhim Singh had only a daughter named Kanchani and no son. She was married to Lakshmi Chandra, the younger son of the Kachari King of Maibong, Kirtichandra, (1736-1755) and he acted as the Governor of Khaspur. This


created an opportunity in the subsequent period to get the two states merged into one perhaps after the death of his father-in-law, Bhim Singh. Mr. Soppitt mentions that about the year 1750 a Raja, his court and the Barmans (the aristocracy) crossed the Barail range and established the Raj, in the plains at Khaspur. This was the beginning of Kachari rule at Khaspur details of which will be given in due course.

Evidently in the fourth century, Cachar and Sylhet formed a part of the Samatata Kingdom. In the fifth century, Cachar was under Sylhet according to the Bhatera Copper Plate inscription. In the Sixth-seventh century A.D. Cachar was under the Varman rulers of Kamrup. In the seventh century A.D. Harikela State emerged in Sylhet, and once again Cachar came under its rule and, remained so up to the tenth century A.D. Nothing precisely can be stated about Cachar, during the period from the tenth to the twelfth century A.D. But the history of Cachar in this period, too, can be reconstructed by synchronising contemporary events. In the 13th Century A.D. the Tripuri rule began in Cachar and was followed by the rule of the Koches in the 18th century A.D. The Kacharis of Maibong

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40 Guha, U.C., n.11, P. 33, Also Khan Amanatullah, n.32, P. 237

41 Soppitt. C.A. Historical and descriptive account of the Kachari Tribes in the North Cachar Hills, Shillong, Secretariat press, 1885, P.4, (quoted from Allen, B.C. Cachar District Gazetteer, P.23). It is observed that the king of the merger state was Maharaja Gopichandra on the basis of a local chronicle (see Bhattacharjee, J.B., n.28, P. 115.
shifted their headquarters from Maibong to Khaspur in the plains of Cachar by the middle of the 18th century. The purpose of the present work is to recount in the subsequent chapters life of the Kacharis centering round Khaspur from the middle of the eighteenth century to the final collapse of their Kachari Kingdom in 1832.