CHAPTER V

THE PATTERN OF ECONOMY UNDER THE AHOM AND CONDITION OF THE SUBJECTS

The economy of Assam under the Ahoms was mainly rural-cum-agricultural pattern in feudal environment. The civilization was more rural than urban; the social set-up feudalistic rather than modern, mainstay of the people was the agricultural pursuits and cottage industries.

Agriculture was the prime occupation of the people of Assam under the Ahom. That agriculture was basic to the whole economy is evident from the varieties of crops raised and also from the numerous names of categories of rice cultivated, that have come down to us since those times. Like

Ahu, guni, phapari, pijli, nilaji, ahubari, pharma, Bao; Lahi, Kharika Jaha, gidapuri, bhabli, gobind-tulsi, Saru-jul, jahinga, mathanga, malbhog, dalkachu, barmathanga, paru jahinga, Chakhur, Charibuli, bara, bagitara, nekera, batakphai, dhankhau, Chakoa, boka jahinga, Kataridabua, phatakatha bara, Kangabara, bar sohagmoni, Saru sohagmani; Sali, Bar Sali, Saru Sali, anquisali, ranga sali, malchur, kala sali, Sagar Sali, Kaldharm, Barjuls, gendhali sali, maguri.  

Mention may be made of other cereal crops like gam-dhan and Kanidhan; pulse crops like Mati Kalai (Phaseolus radiatus), Mug (Phaseolus mungo), Khesari (Lathyrus Sativus), Mirior ahrar (cytisus cajan), varieties of beans, Sariaha or mustard; —

— fiber crops like Rhea (cytisus cajan), Lessera-maha and urahi-maha (varieties of beans), Sariaha or mustard; fiber crops like Rhea grass, Kapas or cotton and miscellaneous crops like sugar cane: indigo, pan-shrubs, betel nut palms and plantains etc.,

mulberry, lumi: black pepper (jaluk), capsicum (Jalakia), Yam or Kachu and pumpkins.
and jungle products like silk, bees wax and India rubber, Mishmi-tita. Mejati or madder etc.,
and fruit trees like Somathira (Orange), Mithanebu (Sweet lime), Patinebu (lemon), panimari, Jatimari, halanga mari and mithamari (Varieties of citron), jaratenga, ranga rabab, baga rabab. bartenga, Sakla, Sekera, jamira, karja tenga, jalpai (olive), Karday etc.

They domesticated certain animals. Domestic animals used for agricultural and other purposes. Assam abounds in many parts with valuable timber, not of the ornamental but the useful type, adopted for building or for canoes etc.

M’cosh referees to 90 varieties of timbers of Assam, e.g., Jotikorai, Korni, Chatiyam, Dudkuri, Bhela, uriam, borohelock, Aggur and Langchi, Kangtali Chama etc.

There were different professional classes. There were cotton weavers who had a little capital to enable them to purchase thread. —

2. Ibid, p. 252.
— Small dealers purchased the cloth and hawked it about; for there were no shops and a few markets.\(^7\)

There were *turners* of all castes. They worked in buffaloes’ horn and ivory. Different sets of chess-men used to be made of horn and ivory.\(^8\)

There were *oilmen*. “They use both the mill commonly employed in Ranggapur and also press the oil by two boards, which are acted upon by a long lever. In Assam proper the mustard seed is usually parched and powdered in a mortar before it is squeezed”.\(^9\) There were a few brick-makers and brick-layers who were employed by the king. Other persons were not permitted to use bricks.

At the capital there were a few Bengalese shoe-makers, exclusively for royal purpose. No one is allowed to wear shoes without a special license from the king, and it is an indulgence that is very rarely granted.\(^10\)

There were no butchers. The blacksmiths were mostly Kalitas and Koch. The locks, padlocks, sacrificial knives, spears, spike-nails and clamps for building boats and match-locks were made by ‘*Kamaras*’.\(^{11}\)

Different implements like Plough-share, hatchets, hoes, pick-axes, knives, spindles for spinning, the rod for cleaning the implement used in smoking tobacco, lamps of different kinds, different cooking pots were made by the indigenous workers.

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\(^8\) Ibid., p. 63

\(^9\) Ibid

\(^10\) Ibid

The Goldsmiths were mostly Kalitas. They had not much capital but some tools. The consumer had to provide the required materials, metals, of which the workmen receive a share as wage.\textsuperscript{12}

The coppersmiths were mostly of Kalitas.\textsuperscript{13} None of them had a capital more than a hundred rupees.\textsuperscript{14} There were many carpenters among the Kalitas and other tribes. They were chiefly employed to construct boats, canoes and house. They also made the implements of agricultural and household use. They lacked capital.\textsuperscript{15}

Men of all castes could work in bamboo.\textsuperscript{16}

The tradesmen in general had their cultivation also. The wealthy people could keep the slaves.\textsuperscript{17}

Thus agricultural operations used to be supplemented by various economic occupations and avocations. There were also different cottage industries and home manufacturers and arts and crafts\textsuperscript{18} of which the following are illustrative.

\textsuperscript{12} Allen, Assam District Gazetters, Vol. VII (Sibsagar), pp. 80-94.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, pp. 157-168.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Hamilton, An Account of Assam, p. 60.
\textsuperscript{16} Allen, Assam District Gazetters, Vol. III (Goalpara), pp. 84,90,106.
\textsuperscript{17} Francis Buchanan Hamilton, Account of Assam, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{18} U.N. Gohain, Assam under the Ahoms, pp. 183-211.
There were Industries like—"Spinning and Weaving". There was a considerable amount of cotton produced in the country. In North Lakhimpur and Mangaldai districts, there was one specific variety of cotton was grown. In Jorhat and Nowgong there were two, while in Kamrup three varieties were grown. The women of the family are expected to make their own cloths.19

The practice of "dyeing" of cotton articles was prevalent. The gold and silver wire (guna) used for embroidery was made by a class of workers called Guna Katia.

The Pat Silk was a most characteristic industry of the Assam Valley. The rearing of silk worms and the manufacture of cloth from their thread.20 Still that practice is prevalent in some part of the state.

Tusser was cultivated in the hay days of the Assam silk industry, but it is now entirely neglected as being inferior to muga.

Eri (Attacus ricini) is a multivoltine silk worm. It is called Eri21, as it is fed on the castor-oil plant (Ricinus Communis) called 'Era' in Assamese.


21. Stack, Silk in Assam (Notes on some Industries of Assam, 1884-1895).
Muga (Antheroea Assama) produced the most delicate silk, and the genuine muga is distinguished by the title of ‘Sumpatia’, muga, i.e., the silk yielded by the worm that feeds on the ‘Sum’ leaf.\textsuperscript{22}

The arts of carving in ivory and wood were in vogue. The people made their boxes, trays, stools, chairs and other wooded articles by carving them out of a single block of wood.

Brass vessels were made by the Morias out of thin sheets of brass beaten out and pieced together.\textsuperscript{23}

The potters were well prevalent in Assam. There were two classes of potters - the Hiras (a caste peculiar to the Valley) and the Kumars (a section of the Kalita caste). The Hiras are distinguished from Kumars by the fact that their workers are women who shape the vessels by hand without the help of the potter’s wheel.\textsuperscript{24}

Jewellery of various patterns set with diamonds, rubies and other precious stones used to be made in Assam and worn by the aristocracy, both male and female.\textsuperscript{25} Indigenous lac was produced in Assam forests.\textsuperscript{26}

Elephant catching (Kheddas) had always been a great hobby with the Ahom kings. Elephants were used in different purposes.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{22} E.Stack, Silk in Assam (Notes on some Industries of Assam), 1884-95, pp. 13-21. B.C. Allen, Monograph on the silk cloths of Assam, 1899.

\textsuperscript{23} Allen, Assam District Gazetters, Vol. IV (Kamrup), pp. 155-165. Ibid P.186-212

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid 152-163

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid 155-165

\textsuperscript{27} M.I. Borah, Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, Vol. II, p. 488.
Mineral Productions occupied an important place in the economy. In the time of the Ahom kings gold was regularly washed from many of the rivers in the Assam Valley. The Sonwals or gold-washers were designated for that purpose.  

Iron exists in Assam in great quantity and in various forms. In the days of the Ahom kings the smelting of iron-ore was extensively practiced. The iron-ore formerly smelted in Sibsagar was derived from those of Nazira field, and from impure limonite which occurs in great abundance in the Tipam rock south of the Dhodar Ali.  

Lime Stones found near the Nambor, Deopani, Hariajan and Jamuna rivers, were worked for the construction of royal palaces, bridges and temple.  

The Ahom kingdom was bounded almost on all sides by lofty hills with narrow and difficult passes. The Brahmaputra was the great highway which connected Assam with Bengal, but the journey was a very lengthy business.  

M'Cosh,* writing in 1837, stated that a large boat took from six to seven weeks to come from Calcutta to Gauhati —

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* M'Cosh, Topography of Assam, pp. 36-43;
Thus difficulties of communication stood on the way of development of trade and commerce. Furthermore, the Ahoms had to be constantly on the alert against foreign invasions, especially of the Mohammedans.

The Ahom Government had to put restrictions on strangers, traders and others. This also retarded commercial intercourse. Despite these drawbacks, a considerable volume of trade and commerce, internal and external grew.32

Politics and trade, however, were treated on different footing. Over-all security of the State was considered more important than trade. Strict, ever-vigilant watch was maintained over merchants of foreign countries and they were not allowed to settle in the country lest they should create disruption as secret agents of designing States. The foreign traders had to complete their commercial transactions in Assam in all haste and return to their own land.

In a copper plate deed of grant of 1661 Sak, i.e., 1739 A.D., prices of various commodities are quoted as below: - Rice, 21/5 annas per maund; milk, 21/2 annas, gram, 4 annas, salt and oil, 4 3/4 annas; gur 1 1/4 annas and black pepper, Rs. 20 per mound; betal leaf, 1 anna per 40 bundles; earthen pots or Kalsis, Re. 1 per 643; area nuts, Re. 1 per 5,120. In similar records of the same period, the following figures are available: Rice, 4 annas or 8 annas per maund; gur, Rs. 2 1/2; mati kalai -5 annas; or 10 annas per maund; gur, Rs. 2 1/2; mati kalia 5 annas; —

— or 10 annas per maund; pulse and ghi, 10 annas, and oil Rs. 3$\frac{1}{3}$ per maund; earthen pots, Re. 1 for 224 and betal leaf, 1 anna per 20 bundles of 20 leaves each; goats, Re. 1 each; ducks, 1 anna each; pigeons, 1 pice; dhutis, 5 annas and gamochas, 6 pice each; slat Rs. 5 to Rs. 10 per maund.\textsuperscript{33}

The money market was not developed one in the medieval Assam. The subjects were strictly confined in certain Khels and Mel under strict control of the respective head. The holdings of the common paiks were small. It could provide them only the bare necessity. All the major area of the productions was owned by the state, it reduced any chance of development of any private entrepreneur. The Paiks did not have surplus production to think of any kind of material development for his personal prosperity. He remained at a level of his entire life.

\textsuperscript{33} Gait, History of Assam, p 217, footnote
THE IMPACT OF THE SYSTEM OF LAND DISTRIBUTION AND REVENUE

It is difficult to get a comprehensive contemporary account of the Ahom land system and public finance. The fact of the existing Burunji, Copper plate grants supply valuable but scattered details only. However traditional Tai practice provides valuable account on this aspect. The accounts or reports of later periods left by Captain Welsh, John Peter Wade, Hamilton-Buchanan and Fancies Jenkins, the Commissioner of Revenue (1849) during 18th and 19th centuries and remark of Edward Gait, are valuable to analyze the revenue settlement under Ahoms.

However, recently S.N. Goswami’s "A History of Revenue Administration in Assam, 1228-1826 (1986)," Barbarua’s "Ahomar Din" and L. Gogol’s Buranjis supply valuable compendium of acts relating to the land system.

The administrative and revenue structure in Assam can be divided as follows: (i) the central or metropolitan area, first with Garhgaon and later, from end of 17th century, Rangpur, under the BarBarua, assisted by a few-Chakial Gohains as at Jagi and Raha; (ii) the frontier governors at Sadiya, Marangi and Sala (besides Kajali) and -(iii) the special case of Kamruap, the bone of contention between Assam and the Mughals, besides its adjoining areas including the deshas of Darrang, Beltola, Rani and Luki as well as the Nine chiftainships of Gobha, Neli, Panbari and others under the jurisdiction of the Barphukan of Guwahati.

Ahom land system reflected the traditional Tai practice.

1.Barpujari H.K.CHA voll, II P88
Gradually changes were introduced as a result of contact with the indigenous people. But the fundamental Tai concept of land ownership, being vested not in the peasants (paiks) or the people but in the king or the state, continued in theory till the end of Ahom rule.\(^2\)

The king could distribute the land at his will and transfer the right of collection of dues to the donee individuals or institutions like temples or sattras. The royal claim of ownership was not exercised except in cases of disputes over possession. True also that some 18th century inscriptions refer to alienation of lands not to individual paiks but to collective unit or “got” of four (later on three) which tend to support the theory of clan ownership.\(^3\)

However, the fundamental fact that, both land and the paiks were held to be state properties in Assam.

Thus the rent-free ga-mati of two puras of land allowed to a Paik was regarded as state property, not heritable by him but transferable by the king to any other paiks. On the other hand the barimati for house and garden-

\(^2\) Graham, Siam, i, 85; 234-5; Milne, Shans at Home (1910-98), Robinson, 200; Gait (3), 254-5. CHA VOLL III P 90

As the people supplied the government and the chief families with all their needs free of cost, they did not pay land revenue in cash. But they paid a poll-tax and excess revenue from lands given rent-free of service to the state. Imperial Gazetteer, iv 86. Buranjis, ch. 5; BarBarua, 560. CHA VOLL III P 90

\(^3\) Pedakakats of Kamalesvar Simha, Saka 1723, 1724; case No. 653, 437; Guwahati and Nagaon, in Goswami, 31-87. Opinion of Captain Brodie, Magistrate Negaon, 1835, on clan ownerships. Report on Judicial and Revenue Administration of Assam, 1835, 119; Note by David Scott in Welsh’s Report on Assam, 1794. Goswami, 30-3. CHA voll III P 91
- could be owned as hereditary land in full proprietary right and was exempt from direct taxation.\textsuperscript{4}

The lands were classified on the basis of purpose of the land; like homestead land (vati or veti) with tank or barren homestead land, pasture or grazing field.

Other bases were varieties and capacity of soil and contour:

(i) rupit, ropit or rowati or rice lands:

(ii) faringati, dry rice land or high land suitable for crops other than rice;

(iii) land for raising seedlings: kathiyatali, for \textit{Sali paddy}.

(iv) baotali, generally low lying lands suitable for producing a king of paddy grown in spring; or land for a king of deep water paddy;

(v) jalatak, waterly land;

(vi) dalani, low-lying or marshy lands supplying dal grass, a variety of long grass in abundance as fodder for animals like buffaloes;

(vii) bil - fishing waters; obar-bill, surplus tank for fisheries;

(viii) bakari, open master land;

(ix) habi or habi-tali (forests);

(x) ubar or oobar basti, surplus, or deserted homestead, desolate, lying unoccupied, land not settled with one, i.e.,\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{4} Such lands were not measured and a person had a free right to the free possession of all such lands as he might in any way have acquired, and he could give them away by gift, or will or by mortage.\textit{CHA VOLL III P 91}

\textsuperscript{5} Classification, gleaned from epigraphs, see PS, 135. These terms occur in a number of inscriptions referred to therein. Dag-Chitha of Dipesvar, Devalaya no, 664 and Brahmottara. Case no. 641, Suryadhar Sarma, Balikuchi, Kamrup, in Goswami, 86. BRP, November, 1872, 32; Gohain, 115-6. \textit{CHA VOLL III P 91}
Each adult individual or Paik was allowed to hold a sizeable economic holding of 2 puras (about 3 acres, or \(2\frac{1}{2}\) acres) or 4 bighas or best agricultural land (rupit) to grow rice and other cereals, to maintain his family. This was technically called ga-mati or body-land or per-capita land.  

The *ga-mati* or body land of the paik was considered as the property of the State and theoretically was neither hereditary nor transferable. The rupit lands were duly registered as such as the subordinate officers had to provide each working Paik with his share of land, alloting it from the land lapsed by death or other casualty.  

The Paik also received homestead lands for houses and gardens. All this was free of the usual revenue in kind or cash. in theory all such lands were hereditary, subject to the observance of the Paik-regulations, but were not transferable or saleable, except with the king’s order. In practice, however, the agricultural land (not the homestead lands) was redistributed periodically among the paiks.  

Thus the basic pattern of the land system and distribution of land in Assam rested on the concept that land revenue consisted in personal labour service of the peasant-paiks.  

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6. Principles of Momai Tamuli Barbarua’s land allotment to paiks in Satsari Para, 164; (see note by Scott, 68 in Account); Jenkins, Report, 4; 22; Robinson, 202-23; Mills,2; Haliram, 52. In Japan a similar system prevailed after the reform of 646.  

A.D. CHA VOLL III P 92  

7. Ibid  

8. Ibid  

9. CHA VOLL III P 92
The khats or estates consisted of lands and retainers. These were all revenue-free grant. The different officials e.g. the councilors, the frontier governors and office assistants (kakatis doing clerical works) used to enjoy these estates.\textsuperscript{10}

In Lower Assam alienation of land was considerable and was effected in various ways. Further, revenue-free (non-kar or na-kharaj or lakhiraj) lands came to be granted by kings for religious or charitable purposes, to different religious sects. Since Pratap Simha's initiation into Hinduism from mid-16th century, the Ahom kings with the proverbial zeal of neo-phytes started granting extensive areas of land for religious and charitable institutions or purposes.\textsuperscript{11}

Such grants, inscribed on copper-plates with seals of the king and the Barphukan of Lower Assam, testified to the growing Hindu influence. But the paikan system still survived. These were variously known according to the beneficiary. Rent-free lands, earmarked for services to Gods and temples were “devottar”,\textsuperscript{12} those for religious and charitable purposes were “dhromottar”, while those intended for maintenance of Brahmans were called “brahmottar”. In the 18th century the successors of Rudra Simha viz., Siva Simha (1714-44), Pramatta Simha (1744-51), Rajesvar Simha (1751-60) –

\textsuperscript{10} CHA VOLL III P 92
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid
\textsuperscript{12} The devottar lands were of two kinds. Those growing articles of oblation for daily use in temple were termed bhogdhanī. Those allotted to paiks specially attached to temples for cultivating their lands were called paikan. CHA VOLL III P 92
—and Gaurinath Simha (1780-95) granted vast areas in revenue-free estates for religious purposes to temples and Brahmans. The priests and their descendants could enjoy the lands granted for religious purposes on condition of performing their assigned duties but had no right of alienation. Non-Brahmans, too, were the beneficiaries of such munificence.13

The lands granted by the Ahom kings for religious purpose to Hindus and Muslims were termed during the British rule as lakhiraj (wholly revenue-free) and nisf-khiraj (half-revenue free, or accessed at half rates). The total area of cultivable revenue-free land granted to temples was estimated by Moffat Mills in 1854 at 7,75,468 puras. Further enquiries till 1870 by the British estimated the extent of revenue-free and half-revenue-free lands granted by the rulers in Kamrup alone. About 1884 the Madhava temple of Hajo enjoyed the largest revenue-free estate of 12,650 acres, while to Parvatiya Gossain, the religious head of Kamrup, was assigned the largest half-revenue-free estate of 14,172 acres.14 Kamrup, however, in the 17th century changed hands successively from the Koches to the Mughals and then finally to Ahom.

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13. Jenkins, Report, paras 21-3; Sadar Amin 120, 124; Haliram, 53.
14. This distinction in terminology was perhaps made as late as 1871 by the then Commissioner of Assam. Baden Powell. Land System of British India, iii, 406, 1854; Assam Revenue and Agriculture Proceedings, 1884, 29, CHA VOLL III P 93
In Kamrup, the first Koch king, Visva Simha, collected land revenue from the people as a part of the produce. But it was the second king Nara Narayan, who introduced here the Paik system of Assam as the mainstay of the socio-economic and military organization. The cultivators were also soldiers. As four adult males (charipowa) formed a got according to the census, one became a powa Paik and allowed three puras (12 bighas) of revenue-free arable land (paikan or chakran), called jagirs in Mughal histories. Land revenue was paid not in cash but through personal service. Koch Bihar was divided by Nara Narayan in 1581 into two parts: -the western kingdom (of KochBihar) under his son, Lakshmi Narayan, and the eastern kingdom (of Kamrup) under his nephew, Raghudeva.15

When it was under the Mughal; Jahangir depued Shaikh Ibrahim Krori (Karodi) as Amin, known as Shek Birahim, to make a new revenue settlement (bandobast). Sheikh introduced an innovation, the Mughal system of sarkars and parganas. Hence he is spoken of in the Buranjis as having replaced the old chaklabandi by parganabandi.16

The pargana system of the Mughal in Kamrup, suffered from certain flaws. These were neither uniform in area nor compact in location

15. For Koch administrative system see, KB, 31. Gunabhiram, 5-7. in 1582 Todar Mal though appointed governor Bengal could not proceed there and prepared his Asi Jama Tumar (revenue) for Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. the area to the east of the Kosi to the north of Ghoraghat together with Kamata was included in the four sarkars of Purnea. Tajpur, Panjara and ghoraghat. Sarkar Sylhet was also included in his jamabandi papers. Itihas 93-4, 125. CHA VOLL III P 91

16. For Shaikh Ibrahim; KB (second edition), ch. v. CHA VOLL III P 93
However, the system introduced by Shaikh Ibrahim, continued, through the 50-year old period of Ahom recovery, down to the early period of the Company's rule.\(^\text{17}\)

The introduction of the Mughal revenue methods, e.g., realization of revenue in cash or kind, farming of lands (ijara) and oppressive practices of various officers, caused a violent though abortive reaction (virtually a rebellion) among the Paik-peasants in Kamrup.*

For more than half a century the land system of Kamrup followed that of Mughal Bengal and survived till British times. *

In other words, the land revenue was a share in the produce of the land in sharp contrast with the personal labor service of the peasant-Paiks of Assam. \(^\text{18}\)

Prince Shuja as Governor of Bengal moderated Todar Mai's Asl Jama Turnar and had new jamabandi papers. The sarkars of Koch Bihar and parts of Kamrup were counted among the 34 Bengal sarkars with a total -

\(^\text{17}\) These 'were not all districts comprised in one locality or compact lot within one boundary, but some of the parganas had toluks scattered throughout the whole division and paraganas were of very unequal sites' (para 33, Jenkins, Report). CHA VOLL III P 94

* Dealt in baharistan-i-Ghaibi and CHA, ii (iii-2).

* CHA VOLL III P 95

\(^\text{18}\) KB, 31-2; PS, 110 f; 221 Itihas, 247-8, 261-2, Jenkins Report, Robinson, 204-5. For living in parganas the people of Kamrup were called pargantas; only in Ujani, Asamiyas. There was one pargana named Dhekeri to the west of Mangaldoi subdivision. So these were also called as Dhekeris by the latter. The calculation of the number of 63 parganas in Kamrup is not quite clear. The KB, (ch. 6) gives the division of Kamrup into parganas under Mughal rule which comes to 56, \((22+19+10+5)\) in four sarkars. CHA VOLL III P 95
Kamrup was conquered by the Ahoms from the Mughal in 1682. The expulsion of the Mughal did not mean a clean sweep of the Mughal system; however, it did affect their land revenue administration. Kamrup was placed under the over-all control of the Barphukan. As its chief executive, revenue and judicial officer with Guwahati as his headquarters, he held sway over the modern districts of Dhubri and Rangamati, Darrang and the petty chiefs contiguous to Kamrup and Nagaon districts.

In Kamrup, "The annual revenue for one pura of arable land was fixed at 1½ or 2 or 3 annas in different parganas. Each quarter Paik had to pay as commutation money for labour service to the state (ga-dhan) Rs. 5 or a shawl (pachara) instead. No revenue (katai) was payable for homestead or orchard land. The people had to pay revenue (katal) in cash in Kamrup, pay the rajah's dues in Darrang. In areas where the paikan system was in vogue the people had to render personal service under the officers like the Phukan and the Barua. The Rajas of the frontier outposts on the hill-passes had to pay the state revenue and to maintain the Paik militia." Again it is mentioned that —

19. Rajeswar, 244-5; AAR, 262; Bhattacharya, 165 The sarkarwise distribution stood as follows. (i) Bangalbhum (Bhitarband and Bahirband)...Rs. 1,37,728. (ii) Dhubri and Dhekeri (with two parganas north Dakhinkul upto Golapara on east)...Rs. 6,126 (iii) Dakhinkul (Karaibari and two other parganas east of the Brahmaputra) 27,821 (iv) Uttarkul (Kamrup to the west of Assam with three parganas) 31,451 total Rs. 2,03,126, CHA VOLL III P 95
20. Sadar Anin, 96, 119-20; Satsari, 199; Hamilton, 18, 27-8; Goswami, 185. Ibid
— "The gentry (bhaimanuh or bhadralok), recognized as such by the state had not to pay any katal (revenue). But on the occasion of royal coronation householders had to pay gold weighting one tola and received a suit of dress as royal gift in return. The powajay bhal-manuhs (counted at the rate of quarter paiks for each person) had to pay katal paikan land free of revenue for their upkeep. Further, retired officers were honoured by revenue-free land (man-mati). The officers in active service were also granted such land (man-mati) in proportion to their rank and they could maintain their own soldiers, without any money-payment like modern officers". 22

Certain rights and privileges were allowed to the border hill-tribes, like the Nagas, the Daffas, the Akas, the Mikirs (karbis), the Singphos, the Abors (Adis), and the Bhutanese- in the foot-hill lands of the plains, including the right of posa - to get a few specified varieties of produce from the lands adjacent to the hills. "As the main objective of the system was to purchase immunity of the weak peasants of the rich plains from the plundering raids of the poor hill men it amounted to blackmail". However, the frontier tribes had to pay a hoe-tax (kor-kar) of Re. 1 for cotton cultivation on dry or hilly lands. 23

The Bhutias to whom the Ahom assigned vast areas in the duars viz., Bijn, Chappakhamar, Chappaguri, Baska and Ghorkola for protection had to pay an annual tribute. 24

22.Ibid,
23.Ibid P99, Robinson,206-7
24.Ibid
As the peasant-paiks used to supply all their necessaries of the government and chief officers free of cost, normally there was little need for a money-tax. Gradually the Paik service became saleable. The paiks eloped from the Khels and gradually this system died a natural death especially from the closing years of the 18th century.

In the later phase of the Ahom domination cash system of revenue collection introduced. Pressure of circumstances led to a change in the system of personal service of paiks. Owing to losses in man-power due to Mughal wars in the 17th century, the cultivating paiks could get the Personal labor services commuted by a money payment at the rate of Re.1 for a pura each for two puras of Rs. 2 a year. He had also to pay Re. 1 as ga-dhan i.e., Rs. 3 in all. The Ahoms preferred labour service more than money as their main plank of land taxation. But this symbolic monetary alternative was forced on them by the altered situation.

25. Haliram,92; Jenkins, Report 4, App.22; Assam Revenue and Agricultural Proceedings, 1884,37; Barbarua,496: One pura is equal to $2^{2/3}$ acres.ch.III;97-129.

26. From the report of Jenkins it appears that Upper Assam came to be ‘divided into recognized local districts, mauzas and tangonis, which appear to have had little or no connection with the khel system, and perhaps were the remains of a preceding system under former dynasties; and these divisions greatly facilitated for carrying out the arrangement.’ A tangani means a definite area or a group of villages for administrative purposes. CHA VOLL III P 99

27. Jenkins, Report, para 30; Re: Welsh found (1794) that the paiks were mainly employed as labourers. The revenue derived from commutation of service ranged from Rs. 6 to 18 for a got, and that many were exempted on account of their caste or rank or by purchase. In his opinion, however; ‘by far the largest portion still continue to work, in a most unprofitable manner for the Government’, Account, 73. CHA VOLL III P 100
A Paik-peasant, enjoying paikan and bari lands allotted for maintenance, might cultivate surplus or additional lands (oobar'). He had to pay rant for this excess land at Re. 1 for rupit and annas 8 a pura for other lands. Further, there were other taxes in different parts of the country. Sometimes owing to heavy floods the lands were not always cultivated. Again, lands were often cultivated mainly by riots from other pargana or mauzas. In such cases a plough tax was levied at Rs. 2 to 8 on a plough. 28

Such riots also paid capitation tax to the Chaudhuris in whose jurisdictions their homesteads (baris) lay. Others, including hill tribes, cultivating dry or hilly lands for cotton etc., without ploughs, had to pay a tax at Re. 1 for a hoe (kodal). However, forests, grazing fields and other uncultivated lands, used by the villages, were left untaxed. 29

Towards the end of Ahom rule, some king of Assam imposed a capitation or poll-tax on all paiks under new names, hitherto unknown in Assam, in order to raise revenue. 30

As Mills writes, 'As an equivalent for the exemption of these lands (called Bori or Bri land) from assessment, their paiks paid throughout the country, a poll tax, variously named...'. The rates also differed in different areas. In Kamrup it was a House tax (ghar-kar'). —

28 J.N. Sarkar. article Revenue Administration. CHA.Barpujari.H.K. (edit) voll-iii p 100
29. Jenkins, Report, paras 30-1. The rate of plough tax on inundated lands suitable for growing rice was Rs. 2-8. The hoe-tax (Re. 1) was imposed on more elevated lands not suitable for growing rice. Imperial Gazetteer, iv. 86 also in Assam Revenue and Agricultural Proceedings. 1884-37; Barbarua, 496; Gohain,115-6; Buranjis, 222. CHA VOLL III P 100
30. Jenkins, Report, Para 28
In Nagaon and Upper Assam (Lakhimpur proper and Sibsagar) it was 'House tax' and a 'Body' or 'Poll-tax' (ga-dhan) both at Re. 1 per each adult Paik. In Darrang it was a 'Hearth- Tax' or 'Chooroo' or cooking pot toll of Re. 1 on every family or party or person high or low.\textsuperscript{31}

Slaves were not taxed in the Ahom state.\textsuperscript{32} But poll-tax was heavier on some Khels of artisans and a few non-cultivating occupational classes who were mostly non-Ahoms. There were also poll taxes on persons, not on land. The annual rates were for gold-washer (Sonwais), braziers Rs. 5, oil-pressers (teli) and fishermen Rs. 3, silk weavers Rs. 2\textsuperscript{33} and hill tribes for shift-cultivation (jhum-kheti) Re. 1 for rice and cotton.\textsuperscript{34}

The aboriginal and other wild tribes occupying the low jungle hills within the province paid a hoe-tax on their cotton cultivation.\textsuperscript{35}

Along with the poll (ga-dhan) and hearth tax the people had to pay the miscellaneous taxes viz;

- \textit{katal} – tax payable by a Paik in lieu of personal service,
- \textit{pad or salami} - in cash or kind paid by chamua paiks for getting an office,
- \textit{panchak} (barangani or pancha) - contribution or voluntary subscription payable in cash or kind on special occasion,

\textsuperscript{31} The British levied kharikatana on farmers of land on a valuation of the cattle of the farmers at 'four rates, according to classification Rs. 3, Rs. 2 Re 1 and annas. (Jenkins, Report para 28), CHA VOLL III P 100-101
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., para 32. CHA VOLL III P 100-101
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., para 29. CHA VOLL III P 101
\textsuperscript{34} Gohain, 117. CHA VOLL III P 101
\textsuperscript{35} Mackenzie, 6. CHA VOLL III P 101
- *baith*—cash or kind, payable to the king for catching elephants, buffaloes or other wild animals,

*beggar*—physical labour on royal requisition,

*chor or cor*—fines for petty thefts or pilferage,

*chhinala* (fines for adultery);

*jalkar*—taxes paid for catching fish in rivers, tanks, etc.

*yavaksara*—license fee for supply of nitre or saltpetre needed in manufacture of gun-powder at house,

*dhumacha or dhumushi*—escheated property of heir-less persons went to the king,

*ghamesha*—dues payable to the king on daughter's marriage,

*maresha (marecha)*—tax payable to the king for donating land for home in a marriage,

*dana*—sales tax,

*khut*—taxes levied on miscellaneous articles (e.g., muga silk) other than land besides the land tax,

*danda*—fines for crimes;

*dutties*—levied at the customs chokis formed an important source of revenue. Mines constituted another important source of revenue. Assam was reputed for its gold and silver, either from mines or from dust, worked by relevant Khels of skilled sonowals (gold washers) and rupowals, supervised by different grades of officers. Gold, according to Hamilton, was available at Pakerguri mines, contained in the —

— sands at the junction of the rivers, the Dhansiri and the Brahmaputra. The net profit of the output of 15,000 tola of gold dust was 18,000 sicca rupees a year to the king. The best gold came from the sands of Jagali and Dikrang rivers, price varied at Rs. 12-18 a tola, while that in Bargang at Rs. 18-20.* Silver mines existed in Barkhamti state, one producing over Rs. 8,000 annually; and near the source of the river Irrawadi, yielding above Rs. 80,000. Mines of precious stones and amber existed in Hukwang province.\(^{37}\)

Iron mines existed at Bassa, Dayang (S.W. of Jorhat) and Jaypur up to Tiru hills, Hatigarh, Nazira and Kacharihat, as well as from the land of the Garos. Smelting of iron ore was an important industry. Early in the 16th century there were 3,000 blacksmiths. Towards the end of the 18th Century from Gaurinath (1780-94) to Chandrakanta Simha (1810-18) there were iron-extractors (lo-slas) or losahlias, blacksmiths (kamars) under different kheldars, Saikias, Hazarikas and Boras, manufacturing knives, swords, spears, guns and Hamilton refers to a valuable iron mine south of Jorhat and remains of workings in the Khasi hills.\(^{38}\)

Revenue were also collected from salt mines (brine springs) and wells. These were mostly located in hostile and unsettled areas. Two existed at Sadiya and Borhat where the salt-extractors (lon-purias) were supervised by Mohang hat Barua. Its annual income was about Rs. 40,000 in 1809. Twenty salt-wells in the interior of the Naga hills were owned by the Nagas;

\(^*\) Hamilton p46-47; AAR, 55,373. CHA VOLL III P 102
\(^{37}\) Ibid., Robinson 243, 273. CHA VOLL III P 102
\(^{38}\) Hamilton 60; BVR, 268,275-276, 58, 61,148; CHA VOLL III P 102
— these were worked jointly for equal periods with the Assamese. Another salt well in Namsang yielded solid salt. An officer known as Sarvarkar placed over 100 extractors (lon-purias) in each mine. He had to pay Rs. 9 as state revenue and also collect the surplus salt produced in each mine. Each got Paik supplied the fixed quota of salt. Further, salt mines within the jurisdiction of the Salal Gohain also paid revenue on similar lines.39

It is, not therefore, surprising that different sources give vastly discordant figures of total revenue of particular areas.40

Whereas, “Of the broad heads of expenditure, a considerable amount was spent on the king and his household. This includes religious worship, of Somdeo and of other deities, installation ceremonies, funerary rites and construction of maidams, marriages, Rikkhvan ceremonies and royal processions, dresses, ornaments of the royal ladies etc.”41

Thus, it has been very clear from the above discussion that the Paiks had less land than requirement. They had to pay heavy taxes to the State in different occasion in different heads.

The Ahom government totally depended on the Paiks for cash or kind for state expenditure. The trade and commercial activities was very low. It contributed negligible amount to the royal treasury. The Pikes were suppressed economically under the economic and land —

39. BVR, 83-4, 280-1, M. Cosh, 61-2; Pemberton, 82-4; Robinson, 33-4, 385 Barpujari, Assam, 260-1, Haliram 105-7.
40. Goswami, 127-9 and f.n.s. 86-97 (155-7).
41. Deodhai, 142-3, TB, 174; NBP, 466, 475, 509. CHA VOLL III P 103
— revenue system of the Ahom. They were instrument only in the state production system. The entire burden of the state expenditure born by the Paiks. From cultivation to handicrafts, all the production through the Khels were tightly tied with the royal taxation at the cost of the Paiks. In performing any kind of ceremony he had to pay stipulated tax levied by the state cash or kind. It generally created the discontentment among the common people.

All the Ahom kings Gadadhar onward took massive construction of temples, monasteries as they became the promoter of the Sakta faith of Hinduism. They gave huge donation of land as dhromottar or brahmottar to upkeep all that when the common people largely indoctrinated to the neo-vaishnavite philosophy.

All the good lands were occupied by the royal house, the nobility and the religious institutions. The Paiks had to live in small holdings. The paiks “had to put up with less than their legal share or they could take up inferior lands in a proportion of double or treble quantities according to the presumed qualities of land”

The economic discontentment joined with the religious discontentment which got outburst in the form of Moamariya uprising.

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