CHAPTER - III

Political Background

1. Introduction:

With the end of Jayapala, the unity of the kingdom of Kamarupa was lost and there arose a number of petty kingdoms both in the eastern and western portion of Kamarupa. Amongst the new kingdoms or independant territories that sprang up upon the ruins of the Pala Kingdom, are the kingdoms of Kamata and the Koches, and the small holdings of the Bhuyan-Chiftains in the west, the Morans, the Barahis, the Kalitas, the Chutiias, the Kacharies and the Ahoms had their kingdoms in the east. The other tribal people having their separate political identity, but closely and sometimes remotely connected with Assam of our period, are the Nagas, the Manipuris, the Jayantias, the Khasis, the Tipperas and the Garos. We will not discuss about the political history of these people here; we shall confine ourselves to the accounts of the kingdoms of the former category. But owing to the paucity of details, as well as the unsettled nature of the period, an accurate historical account of each of these kingdoms, except that of the Ahoms and the Koches, is not possible. Whatever historical account is available about these kingdoms of the early medieval period, it is mainly from the Ahom chronicles and the 'Vamsavali' of Koch kings. Most of the dynasties of these kingdoms had not the practice of keeping any historical account relating to their countries. The period beginning from the 13th century A.D. to the 16th century may be considered as the unsettled period, when the Ahom king Shuhumming, alias, Dihingia Raja, during his rule (1497 A.D. - 1539 A.D.) consolidated the Ahom power, almost all over Assam.
2. The Western Area

(a) The Kingdom of Kamata:

The historians believe that because of the absence of any external attack many internal changes took place in the kingdom of Kāmarupa. The Kachāries in the east became more powerful and advanced up to the boundary of the present district of Kamrup and at last compelled the kings of Kāmarupa to transfer their capital from Gauhati further west to Kamatapur. Henceforth the Kāmarupa-kings came to be known by the designation 'Kamateswar' also, and their "kingdom included only the Goalpara and Kamrup districts of the modern Assam valley, besides a portion of northern Bengal and a portion of Mymensing to the east of the Brahmaputra then flowing through that district." 1 It is further believed that Sandhya, a king of Kāmarupa, first shifted the seat of the Government from Gauhati to Kamatapur and he is the first king of the kingdom so named. 2 In the records we simultaneously get two appellations of the kings, viz., 'Kamateswar' and 'Kameswar'. Although some of the feudatory chiefs of the eastern part defying the supremacy of Kamateswar now and then declared themselves independant, it seems that 'Kameswar' and 'Kamateswar' were not two separate persons. 'Kameswar' and 'Kamateswar' were used invariably to signify the same king. We think they used both the appellations in order to justify their supremacy over both the portions (i.e. eastern and western) of their kingdom. Besides, the term 'Kameswar' is an abridged form of the word 'Kāmarupeswar'. Not only that, K.L. Barua going further supposes that the Kamata kings styled themselves as Gaudeswar also, as a part of Gauḍa was within their kingdom; or it may be that the title Gaudeswar was considered to be more high sounding. According to some historians, Dharmapal, a
powerful king of Kamata, brought seven families of Kayasthas from Gauda and established them in the eastern portion, i.e., in Kamarupa, as feudatory chiefs under his vassalage in order to administer this portion of his kingdom smoothly.

Attempts have been made to give a systematic history of this kingdom by different historians of the province so far; still then, there are controversial points where the historians are not unanimous. No dynasty could rule over this kingdom more than two centuries at a time; the throne was constantly changing hands of the usurpers. The controversy amongst the historians as to the reigning period of the different kings of this kingdom, is not yet over.

The kingdom of Kamata, established by Sandhya, flourished from about the second half of the thirteenth century to the end of the fifteenth century. Towards the last part, i.e. about 1440 A.D., Niladhvaja, "who was probably a Bhuyan chief having the surname Khan," occupied the throne of Kamatapur. According to R.N. Nath, the surname is not 'Khān' but 'Khen' or 'Khyen' and they belong to Bodo race. K.L. Barua asserts them to be Bhuyan-Kayasthas. With reference to Niladhvaja he says: "In all probability he was a Kayastha Bhuyan having the surname Khan. We know several of the Kamrupi Bhuyans had this surname; one of the Bhuyan Chiefs who submitted to Hussain Shah, after the flight of Nilambar, was Ghosal Khan and a relative of Sri Sankardeva named Buda Khan and another was Ketāl Khan. The chief minister of Hussain Shah himself was Purandar Khan".

It may be, that they accepted the Mohammadan Surname Khān, either to indicate noble lineage or to establish closer intimacy with the Mohammadans
in power. Khen (Khan) people are still living in Bengal as pure Hindus in the district of Rungpur. Their ceremonial rites are performed by Brahmin-priests and their main pursuit is same with the Kalitas of Assam.

During the reign of Nilambar, the last king of the Khen dynasty, taking advantage of a quarrel between Nilambar and his minister, Hussain Shah of Gauda attacked the kingdom of Nilambar in A.D. 1498. As a result of the stubborn resistance offered by Nilambar as well as for the impregnability of the city, Hussain Shah could not capture or over run it by direct method; at length resorting to a stratagem he captured the capital Kamatapur. It is said that Nilambar escaped and fled towards the hills. After this some local chiefs came into prominence.

In the early part of the Medieval period, this Kamatapur was the cultural centre of Assam and some of the kings of its early part patronised Assamese culture, and especially literature, whole-heartedly. The first book 'Prahrad Charitra' by Hem Saraswati, in Assamese, was composed under the patronage of king Durlabha Narayana of Kamatapur in the 13th century. Dharmapal, alias. Dharm Narayana, Durlabha Narayana and Indra Narayana are best known for their patronage to the Assamese literature. Dharmapal brought many families of Kayasthas and Brāhmaṇas from Gaudā and established them in Kamarupa. Durlabha Narayana and Indra Narayana patronised many Assamese scholars and poets. The Kamatapur kings had diplomatic relations with the Ahom kings of the east and some of them married their daughters to the Ahom kings. In his 'Early History of Kamarupa', K.L. Barua has given
a list of the kings who ruled over Kamata between 1250 A.D. to 1498 A.D. about whom we know very little except their names.

(b) The Rule of the Bhuyans:

The Bhuyans are generally considered as having a long history in Assam. Although most of the Bhuyans are Kayasthas, yet, as stated by Edward Gait, it is true that the term Bhuyan has nothing to do with caste. It means the lord of the land. From 'Darrang Kayansavali' it is learnt that there were Bhuyans belonging to different castes, such as Brahma, Daivajna, and Kayastha. But it will not be wrong to assume that there were prominently two classes of Bhuyans in Assam and in course of time they mixed with each other. According to R.M. Nath, after the annexation of the Kalita territory to the Ahom kingdom by the Ahom king Shumumang, alias Dihingia Raja, Santanu and Suranta, the last descendants of the Kayastha kings of the Kalita kingdom, fled away to Nowgong. At Nowgong they occupied small holdings and came to be known as Bhuyans after the designation of the local land lords who were the emigrants from Bengal. Thus intermixture of two classes of Bhuyans, viz., the Kayastha emigrants from Bengal and the descendants of the Kayastha kings of the Kalita kingdom of the north-east occurred in course of time. But, just prior to the annexation of these territories to the Ahom kingdom, we think, they were perhaps under the vassalage of the Kamata-Kamarupa kings. The Bhuyan-chiefs of the Kalita kingdom mainly spread over in the western portion of Darrang, on the north bank, and the migrated Kayastha Bhuyans were ruling over small holdings in the western portion of modern Nowgong district. They were ruling almost independently from each other.
About the domain of the Bhuyan chiefs, Gait aptly observes: "West of the Kacharies on the south bank and of the Chutias on the north bank were a number of petty chiefs, called Bhuyans, each was independent of the others within his own domain, but they seem to have been in the habit of joining their forces whenever they were threatened by a common enemy. The boundary between the tract ruled by these Bhuyans and the kingdom of Kamrup doubtless varied from time to time; a powerful prince could bring many of them under his control, but they would again become independent when the sceptre passed into the hands of a weaker ruler." 

Now, the origin of the term is the sanskrit "Bhauma" which implies some sort of relation with earth. Sri Sankardeva himself used the word "Bhowmika" as a synonym of the term "Bhuyan". The Bhuyans were owner of small holdings; therefore, it can be safely ascertained that the term was used with particular reference to their ownership of land. In Bengal, Chotanagpur and other parts of India the surnames Bhuyan, Bhowmika, Bhumij etc. are seen used in the same sense. Another fact to be noted with reference to the term Bhuyan in Assam (in Bengal too) is this, that they are "well remembered in Assam legends as the Bāra (twelve) Bhuyan". Not only this, in Assam one section of the Bhuyans is called 'Bar Bāra Bhuyan' and the other section is called 'Saru Bāra Bhuyan'. We have just said above about Santanu and Sumanta, the two sons of Lakṣmi, Santanu being the elder and Sumanta the younger. The descendants of Santanu are known as 'Bar Bāra Bhuyan' and the descendants of Sumanta are known as 'Saru Bāra Bhuyan'. “
When the seat of the Government of the kingdom of Kamarupa was transferred to Kamata, practically their hold over the eastern portion of Kamarupa gradually became weak. Unlike R.M. Nath, we would like to think that at this time the Bhuyan Chiefs, who were nominally feudatories of the kings of Kamarupa and Kamata, ruled over different tracts of lands, in the eastern portion of Kamarupa, as far as Subansiri in the north and Kapili in the south. K.L. Barua is of opinion that the Bhuyans were practically petty chiefs, each one of them exercising legal authority over a small tract, known as 'Vishaya'. They were as if feudal lords under Kamata-Kamarupa kings when the latter were strong enough, and when they grow weak, they became the independent ruler of their own tracts. Each one of them had a court called 'Karkhānā', a Persian word meaning literally a house for work, where they performed magisterial duties, perhaps assisted by Panchayat.

From the biographical and historical records, it is learnt that the Bhuyans were constantly at war with the Ahoms and the Kachāris in the east and south and with the Koches and the Bhutias in the west and north. Politically the Bhuyan Chiefs came into prominence just after the flight or death of Nilambar, the last powerful king of Kamata, belonging to the Khen (Khan) dynasty. After the termination of the Khen dynasty, there ensued a terrible contest amongst the Bhuyan Chiefs for supremacy. But, in the meantime, the Ahoms in the east and the Koches in the west became more powerful and both the powers began to annex the neighbouring holdings of the Bhuyan Chiefs to their own, as a result of which the existence of the Bhuyan Chiefs as feudal lords, came to be extinct.
Apart from the political aspect, the part played by the Bhuyans in the cultural milieu of Assam, is not of less importance; in this respect their position is just next to the Brāhmanas and they constitute a powerful link between the early and the medieval period. In the Medieval period they were the pioneers of the cultural renaissance in the country. The Great Vaisnavite saint Sankardeva, who belonged to the Bhuyan family, introduced a new cult based on 'Bhāgavatapurāṇa', known as 'Bhāgavati Vaiśnava dharma' in Assam. This Vaisnavite movement elevated the social and cultural standard of the Assamese people by introducing many reforms and cultural activities.

(c) The Koch Kingdom

The Koches are a branch of the Tibeto-Burman people or of a greater family called Indo-Mongoloid; therefore, they are akin to the Kachāris, the Tipperas, the Gāros, the Rābbas etc. They came into contact with the Hindu-world long before in the early centuries of the Christian era. The Sanskrit equivalent of the Koch is 'Kuvāca' and in the 'Kālikāpurāṇa' and in the 'Yogini Tantra' they are referred to by this term.

After the Kamata king Nilaṁbara, there prevailed some sort of 'Matsyanyāya' or anarchy in the western part of the Kāmarupa kingdom. During this short period the petty Bhuyan Chiefs, who were once established by the Kāmarupa-Kamata kings, rose into prominence and a tug-of-war began to continue amongst them for supreme power. But this state of things could not continue for a long time and a Bodo leader of the Koch tribe, in the person of Biśu, son of Hāria Mondal, became very powerful. Subsequently, bringing all the Bhuyan Chiefs under his control, Biśu proclaimed himself
as the king of Kamata and assumed the name Biswa Singha at about 1515 A.D.
In the mean time, the Ahoms in the east, became more powerful and began to consolidate their power by annexing the petty kingdoms one after another, as a result of which Biswa Singha had to submit himself to the Ahom king Shuhungmung Xi (A.D. 1497 - 1539). Biswa Singha was not at all happy at it and considered it a great slur on the Koches. He asked his son Naranarayana before his death to remove this stigma, as soon as possible. Biswa Singha's son Naranarayana (A.D. 1540-1586) with the help of his brother Chilarai (Kite-king), who was the minister and great commander-in-chief of his army, soon became more powerful and succeeded in removing the stigma, not only by making themselves independent of the Ahoms but also extending their territory up to the Narayanpur, in the far-east corner of modern North-Lakhimpur Subdivision, having inflicted defeat on the Ahoms. Chilarai defeated the Ahoms twice. He further brought under the control of the Koch king, the neighbouring tribal kingdoms like Manipur, Hm Kachar, the Khasia, & Jayantia and the Tippera. So long the two brothers were alive, the solidarity and the integrity of the Koch kingdom had been preserved with great dignity. Soon after the death of Chilarai, his son Raghudeva Narayan rebelled against his uncle king Naranarayana and making his seat at Barnagar, demanded half of the kingdom on the eastern side, taking the river Sonkos, in the centre. Naranarayana, accordingly divided the kingdom into two, with Sonkos in the centre and the eastern portion was handed over to Raghudeva Narayana. On the death of Naranarayana, in A.D. 1586, things began to proceed from bad to worse; two brothers of the royal family subsequently engaged in fratricidal war calling for the
intervention of the Moguls as well as the Ahoms. After Naranarayana, his son Laksminarayana became king of the western portion with the capital at Kochbehar. King Raghudeva died after reigning for thirty-two years and his son Parikṣit became king. Then there broke out a fratricidal war between Parikṣit and Lakṣmi- narayana and they had to seek help respectively from the Ahoms and the Moguls, as a result of which the eastern portion came under the protection of the Ahoms and western portion the western portion of the Moguls. This is how the Koches within a very short period tumbled down to dust from the pinnacle of glory.

During the reign of king Naranarayana, the Koch power reached the highest watermark. His kingdom included the territories upto the Saumārytha, which formed the Ahom kingdom, and in the west it crossed the river Kartoya; on the south-west it included Rungpur district and part of Mymensing and on the South-east it included whole of the Dakhinkul or South bank of the Brahmaputra as far as Mayang and Dimarua including modern Gauhati and its neighbourhood.

Next to Kamatapur, Kochbehar was the cultural seat of Assam. It was the beginning of the renaissance in Assamese culture. King Naranarayana's reign was highly marked for his patronage to Assamese literature and other cultural activities. Under the lavish patronage of this noble king, the greater portion of the vast non-Aryan population were brought into the Hindu fold and the great literary talents and scholars, including Sri Sankardeva, the Great Vaisnavite preacher,
reformer and literary talent assembled in the court of Kochbehar and rendered monumental services for the growth and development of Assamese culture.

The Koch kings had matrimonial and diplomatic relations with the Ahom kings.

3. The Eastern Portion:

(a) The Barâhis and the Morâns:

Prior to the advent of the Ahoms, there were some tribes, each holding a certain territory under a chief in the north and eastern regions of Assam. Among these tribes the Barâhis and the Morâns deserve special mention. The Barâhis had a comparatively larger kingdom than the Morâns. The Morâns had a small kingdom comprising more or less the modern Dibrugarh Subdivision in the east of Assam. The Barâhis had occupied a larger area ranging from the north-west of Dibrugarh and covering almost the entire modern Sibsagar Subdivision, with their capital at Charâideo. In one of the Chronicles, it is said that, considering the Ahoms as having supernatural power, Thami-Thuma, the then head of the Barâhis, surrendered to the Ahoms. Both the Barâhis and the Morâns were vanquished by the Ahoms at the first stroke and the Ahoms established their capital at Charâideo, the headquarter of the Barâhis. The Morâns submitted to the Ahoms and did not leave their original home; but the Barâhis fled from one place to another and thus scattered all over Assam. Subsequently their power was crushed by the Ahoms and their territories were incorporated into their own. The Ahoms had their wives from the Morâns and the Barâhis; appointed servants from the two communities and
also incorporated many of the Morāns and the Barāhis within the Ahom community, thus causing intermixture of blood between the three communities.

Towards the later part of the Ahom rule, the Morāns being offended for dishonour shown to their religious head and the community at large, rebelled against the Ahoms and for a considerable period they occupied the Ahom throne.

Both the Barāhis and the Morāns are considered to be branches of the Tibeto-Burman family; but about the Morāns, R.M. Nath holds a different view. He is of opinion that the "Morans were very likely a remnant of the ancient Austric Moria clan, intermixed with the Boṭos". The Morāns are locally called Matak or Mahtak, a deviation from sanskrit 'Mastaka'. The land of the Matakas is considered to be the head (Mastaka) of the mother country and hence these inhabitants are called the Matak or Mahtaks. The Matak and Morān, these are kindred designations of the same group of people. A detailed discussion of the two designations will be made in a subsequent chapter.

(b) The Kalitā Kingdom:

There are several suggestions about the origin of the Kalitās. Historians believe that there was a small Hindu kingdom known as Kalitā Rājya in the neighbourhood of Sadia. The rulers of this kingdom claimed their descent from Bhismaka, the father of Rukmini, one of the wives of Lord Krisna. According to others, neither Bhismaka, the father of Rukmini and king of Vidarbha, was ruling here nor they were his direct descendants. This section of writers is of opinion that these people
have migrated to this place from Barar and christened their new capital Bhismak Nagar "in memory of the city of this name in Barar". After establishing their kingdom, these people became more powerful. With the fall of the Pala dynasty in Assam they acquired political importance to a considerable extent. They (the historians) believe that these people belong to the Dacca and were Dravidian by origin. K.I. Barua also supports these people to be of Dravidian origin, who were wiped out by the Mongoloid invaders. Edward Gait believes that this dynasty collapsed by a process of internal decay and on the ruins of this old kingdom, the Chutia kingdom was subsequently built. Elsewhere in our book we have discussed about the Kalitas and have tried to show that in origin they were Alpines. The Kalitas had a long history in Assam; but the date of the Kalita kingdom cannot be ascertained definitely owing to the lack of proper historical evidence. On the evidence of the copperplate inscriptions of the old Kamarupa kings, the date of the Kalita Kingdom cannot go beyond the eleventh century A.D.

As stated by Gait, the Kalitas were first defeated by the Chutias, a section of the Bodos and were driven back to the north-west of the eastern region of Assam. Subsequently, the Ahoms completely defeated them and annexed their territories to their own. The existence of a Kalita kingdom at a distance of fifteen days' journey from Sadia, is also known from a biography called 'Kathā-Gurucharit'. Bhavanipuri Gopal Ātā's mother belonged to the Kalita Kingdom. Gopal Ātā, who was contemporary of Shuhungmung, was born at Nazira, near Gargaon, the capital of the Ahom kingdom, in A.D. 1514. Captain J.P. Neufville's article
published in the *Asiatic Researches*, volume XVI, in the year 1828 A.D., also asserts the existence of the Kalita kingdom at a distance of fifteen days' journey from the north-east frontier of Assam and this kingdom, according to Captain J.F. Neufville, was in existence unto the reign of the Ahom king Rajeswar Singha (A.D. 1752-1768), when probably the kingdom was completely wiped out by a terrible flood. From a copper-plate, issued by Indrapala of the eleventh century A.D., it is further learnt that his father Purandaramula married one princess Durllabhā by name, who was supposed to be the daughter of a king of this Kalita kingdom. But if we believe the existence of the Kalita kingdom unto the time of Rajeswar Singha, then, there will be an anomaly. Because we have stated above that the Ahom king Shuhungmung annexed the Kalita kingdom to his own by defeating the last king, who was by birth a Kayastha. Let us know now try to give a brief description of the kingdom in order to have a clear idea of it, as well as to remove the anomaly, as far as possible.

As has been said above, all the Kalitas mobilized their power and established a kingdom in the north-east of Assam about the eleventh century A.D., or a little prior to it. "The kingdom extended unto the Subansiri River and included the present North Lakhimur Subdivision and a portion of the modern Majuli." It is not possible for us to get a genealogical account of the different kings of this kingdom. After some generations, one of the Kalita kings Srik związ Ramchandra by name, being disturbed by the Chutiās and Barāhis fled away to some unknown destination—"leaving his people to entertain a vain hope that he would return after gathering fresh strength at some future opportune moment." The same historian
further says that the king did not return and had got himself attached with the Daflas. He established a small kingdom with a brick built city named Mayapur on the top of the hill about ten miles to the North-west of the present Harmati Tea Garden, and never returned to his people. We think this exact location of Ramchandra's kingdom as shown by R.M. Nath should not be accepted as certain. On the other hand it may be that this is the kingdom known as Kalita Rajya which was in existence up to the time of Rajeswar Singha, at a distance of fifteen days' journey from the modern Sadia territory. Late S.C. Goswami, in an article entitled 'Kalitas in Kamarupa', published in J.A.R.S. Vol. I No. 3, mentions about such a belief entertained by the Kalitas in Kamrup, that their king would once again come back to them and would rule over them again. According to Late Goswami, the Kalitas were once a very powerful race and they ruled over a kingdom situated at the foot of the Himalayas. Some of the old people amongst the Kalitas in Kamrup, still believe that the Kingdom is still in existence and once again they will be the rulers of Kamrup.

R.M. Nath says that Ramchandra's wife being disgusted at her husband's degradation came down with her two sons. They established two separate small States on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. During this time the earlier kingdom was re-organised by one Nandiswara. From two recently discovered copper plates (one was discovered at Dhemukhania near Ghilamara and the other at Ghilamara, in the modern North-Lakhimpur Subdivision), it is gathered that Nandiswara, who vanquished Birabara (the founder of the Chuti dynasty), had his capital at Sadvhayapur (perhaps modern Sadia). The copper plates were issued in
connection with granting lands to Brahmans, by Satyanarayan and his son Laksminarayana, who were respectively the son and the grandson of Nandiswara. The date of issue of the first copper plate is Saka era 1314 and that of the 2nd one is 1325. From Laksminarayana, the throne was passed to the hands of a Kayastha usurper named Samujidra, who had a son named Manohar. Manohar had a daughter, named Laksmi, who bore two sons Santanu and Sumanta, about whom we have discussed in connection with the rule of the Bhuyan.

The Kalitas were very labourious and expert artisans in masonry, carpentry and metal work and their chief pursuit was agriculture. They established many townships and erected many temples. It is further believed, that the Vasudeva-cult of worship gained a good ground in Assam, during their reign.

(c) The Chutia Kingdom :-

The Chutias, a section of the Bojog, in the middle of the 13th century, or a little prior to it, came to prominence and established a small kingdom in the north eastern region of Assam, in and around modern Sadia territory. The Chutia kings had their surname Pala, after their names, e.g., Birpala, Ratnadhvaja Pala, Vijayadhvaja Pala etc. In the Sanskrit work, the Chutias were perhaps, referred to as 'plava' and a story about the origin of the 'plavas' is also found. In the Yogini Tantra, it is said that in course of time, the Saumiras, i.e., the Ahoms, became the lord of the eastern region; the 'Kuvaca', i.e., the Koches, of the western region; the 'Yavanas', of the southern region and the 'Plavas', i.e., perhaps the Chutias, of the northern region. But the story does not
tally with other accounts found in the chronicles. That the surnames Pāla or Plava, are the Hinduised or Sanskritised names of the Chutiās, there is no doubt about it. K.L.Barua believes that the Chutia kings assumed the surname Pāla in the imitation of the Kamarupa kings of the Paul dynasty.

About the Chutia kingdom, Edward Gait and K.L.Barua think that the Chutia kings established their kingdom on the ruins of the Kalita kingdom. We think, R.M.Nath is more reliable in this point. Birpāla, a leader of the Chutia community, established a small kingdom on the frontiers of the Kalita kingdom. After some generations, one of the Chutia kings, inflicting a crushing defeat on a Kalita king (he was perhaps Ramchandra, who fled away) extended the boundary of the Chutia kingdom to a great extent and made his capital near present Sadia.

Nothing was known definitely however, about the chronology and genealogy of the Chutia kings. Birpāla is the founder of this dynasty. Ratnadhvaja Pāla, alias Gaurinarayana, became king in the Saka year 1146, i.e., A.D. 1244, and set the Chutiā kingdom on a more firm footing, by defeating a neighbouring king, named Bhadrasena. The genealogy of the Chutia kings, given by Kellner in the appendix to Brown's book, agrees with that given by the Deodhai Buranji. Like the Ahoms, the Koches and the Kachāris, the Chutiās also claimed divine origin. There are two stories about the origin of the Chutiā kings in the Deodhai Asam Buranji, which attempt to prove their divinity. We are referring to the more important one here. According to this story, one Birpāla, alias Birbara, who claimed his descent from Bhismak, was a petty king ruling
at Songiri. His queen Rupavati worshipped the Hindu God Kuvera, the god of wealth and property, to be blessed with a son. One day on her way back from her mother's house, God Kuvera, assuming the form of Birpala, co-habited with her. Then Kuvera in a dream informed Birpala about his intercourse with Rupavati and said that as a result of this union a son would be born to him, who would be king in near future. He asked Birpala not to co-habit with Rupavati and to keep her by giving proper protection. Further he asked Birpala to go to a particular tree under which they performed ceremonial rites; whatever things, underneath these the tree he would find, should be treasured and worshipped. Whenever these treasures would go to the hands of others his descendants would lose the kingdom. According to the directions, given in the dream, the next morning Birpala went to the tree and found there a sword, a shield and a gold cat covered by a shield. His queen Rupavati also, in course of time, gave birth to a son, who was named Gaurinarayana. Subsequently, Gaurinarayana succeeded his father in the year 1146 Saka, i.e., 1244 A.D., assuming the new name Ratnadwaja Pala. From the lists of the genealogies, it is learnt that as many as ten kings of this dynasty, emanating from Ratnadwaja Pala to Nitipala, alias Sadhaka Narayana, ruled over this kingdom. According to Deodhai Buranji, Ratnadwaja founded a city named Ratnapur, in the modern Majuli island, after subduing a king named Bhadrasena and gradually he succeeded in extending his power. He had relations both matrimonial and diplomatic with the Kamata kings and sent envoys to the Sultan of Gauja. In the middle of the fourteenth century A.D., the Chutiases entered into conflict with the Ahoms. But at length in the year 1376 A.D., the Chuti king, in the guise of a friend,
invited the Ahom king Sutupha to enjoy a regatta. While the Ahom king was thus amusing himself in the regatta, he was treacherously murdered by the Chutia king. According to another chronicle he was put to death by the Chutia king by placing him under the feet of a bull. The Chutia king was chastised for his treachery by the Ahom king Tyao Khamthi, successor of Sutupha. After this there was no clash between the two kingdoms for a period of more than a century, when in 1513 A.D., the Chutia king Dharadhvaja, alias Dhirnarayana, again invaded the Ahom kingdom. The war continued for a long time and at last the Ahom king Shrumungmung, who personally conducted the operation, completely ransacked the Chutias and annexed the Chutia territory to his own kingdom, in the year 1523 A.D.

The Ahom king transferred a large number of Chutias from their original home and established them at different places in the Ahom kingdom, so that they cannot put their heads together to rise into power again. The Ahom king, moreover, created the post of a new officer known as Sadia Khowa Gohain, with his headquarter at Sadia, to govern the Chutias and to keep strict vigilance upon the surrounding territories as well. Still then, in the reign of Ramadhvaja (A.D. 1673-1675), the Deori Chutias became insubordinate and the Ahom king sent an army to reduce the Chutias to submission.

The Chutias are generally believed to be a section of the Bohors. R.M. Nath believes that their original home was in the neighbourhood of the Swat lake to the north of the Himalayas and to the east of the great Manas lake. From there, they migrated to the south along with the bank of
the river Subansiri and arrived at the confluence of the rivers Subansiri and Lohit about the middle of the 7th century A.D., when the Varman dynasty was in power in Kamarupa. According to him, the word 'Sootia' was derived from the word Swat; the local inhabitants termed them Swatias as they came from the bank of the lake Swat. The word Swatia, perhaps gave rise to the word Chutia and in the place name called Chatia (in the modern district of Darrang which has surely connection with the Chutias), one can reasonably find an intermediary form between 'Swatia' and 'Chutia'.

The Chutias had their own religious belief. But their kings, when Hinduised, accepted the Tantrik faith, perhaps, because of having much more similarities between the two. About their conversion to the Hindu Tantrik faith Dr. S.K. Chatterjee also maintains a similar view. The Ahoms incorporated many Chutias in their own community.

(d) The Kacharis:

The Kacharis are a larger section of the Bodos and are the most aboriginal or earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley; but then, a detailed and a systematic description of the Kacharis cannot be given owing to the dearth of materials. About the term Kachari, Dr. B.K. Kakati surmises that the word Kachari, is connected with sanskrit Kaksata—a hypothetical formation parallel to sanskrit Kirata, a frontier dweller. There is also a hill tract in Assam called Kachar (Cachar). Dr. S.K. Chatterjee says: "the name Kachar meaning 'low lands', or 'border lands', comes from a sanskrit term Kakṣa-vatā (Kachaḍa, Kachar)! The Kacharis called themselves .... 'Dima-sa, sons of the big water'. Dr. Chatterjee says that the Kacharis originally settled along the south bank of the big
river Brahmaputra and they preserved this memory in their name 'Dimā-sā', the sons of the big river, that is the Brahmaputra. For a pretty long time Dimāpur was the capital of the Kachāris. Coming under the influence of Hinduism, the Kachāri kings traced their origin from Chatotkacha, son of Bhima, the second Pândava, through his non-Aryan wife Hidimba. Some of the historians believe that they named their capital Hidimbapur, as a mark of respect shown to Hidimba and the modern term Dimapur is no other than a variation from the sanskrit Hidimbapur. Dr. Chatterjee thinks that the term was originally Dimāpur, a Bodo term having connection with Bodo Dimāsā and later it was sanskritised into Hidimbapur. Edward Gait assumes that some of the kings of the early period, that are found described in the old copper-plates as Mlechcha kings, might have belonged to the Kachāris. We have discussed about the different groups of Bodo, that are connected with the Kachāris.

According to Fisher, as Edward Gait mentions, the Kachāris of North Kāchar believe that they once ruled in Kamarupa and their royal family traced its descent from the Rajas of that country of the Ka line of Ha-Tsung-Sa. The only trustworthy information regarding the Kachāris is contained in the Buranjis dealing with the history of the Ahoms. However, attempts have been made by Dr. S.K. Bhuyan to weave out a systematic history of the Kachāri rule, collecting the materials from the different Buranjis, as far as possible.

In the early part of the Medieval period, when the capital of old Kāmarupa was already shifted to Kamatapur, the western part of the kingdom up to the eastern boundary of the modern district of Kamrup was under the rule of the Hindu kings of Kāmarupa-Kamata. From the old records, available to us, it can be surmised that from the western boundary of the modern
district of Nowgong up to the Sadia in the east, along the south bank of the Brahmaputra, the whole tract was under the rule of the Kachāris. It is gathered from the chronicles that there were two main families of the Kachāris. One was known as the 'Sadiāl Kachāri', i.e., the Kachāris inhabiting the territory of Sadia and its neighbourhood; in the west, the boundary of their territory perhaps extended up to the Dikhau river in the modern Sibsagar subdivision. The other family was called the 'Hedambīal Kachāri', i.e., the Kachāris inhabiting the modern territory of Dimapur and its neighbourhood. When the Sadiāl Kachāris were driven back to the west, they mixed with the Hedambīal Kachāris and it seems that after the fusion of the two families, the Kachāris became more powerful and a strong Kachāri kingdom emerged. Prior to the fusion of the two main families there were different small settlements of the Kachāris, from which emerged a united Kachāri power. On the basis of the information supplied by the Kachāri Buranji, Dr. S.K. Bhuyan remarks: "The extent and jurisdiction of the Kachari kingdom having changed from age to age, we get in this chronicle glimpses of the earlier settlements of the Kachāris and the different venues of their government till a powerful section of the race carved a kingdom for themselves with their capital at Dimapur, and then at Maibang and Khaspur. The urgency for almost every one of these scene-shiftings was the pressure put up on the Kachari Monarchs, by their powerful neighbours and rivals the Ahoms." From the east the Kachāris were pressed by the Ahoms and from the west by the Koches and during the reign of Koch king Narmarayana (A.D. 1540-1586), they were compelled to pay tribute to the Koch king.

As to the extent of the Kachāri kingdom, Gait says that it covered nearly the entire tract from the Dikhau to the Kalang and also the valley of the Dhansiri and the North Kachār Subdivision. The Kachāris, before the advent of the Ahoms, spread over up to the Sadia, but they had to withdraw
to the west of the Dikhaul river, because to their quarrel with the Nagas. When the Ahoms entered into this territory, they were reported of the presence of the Kachāris by the Barāhis, just a little prior to their (Ahoms) entrance. The river Dikhaul formed a boundary between the Ahoms and the Kachāris for some time; but as Gait asserts, it is not for hundred years. Gait is further wrong to say that there were no hostilities between the two tribes until 1490. From the extant records, it is learnt that after Sukapha, during the reign of Shuteupha (A.D. 1268-1281), the Kachāris were driven back to the Chāring in the west, and the territory was incorporated into the Ahom kingdom. Then in the reign of Shuhungmung (1497-1539), the Kachāris were first driven back to the other side of the river Dhansiri and the hostility did not stop there. In the year 1536 A.D., the Ahoms sacked Dimāpur and put the Kachāri king Detchung to death.

Henceforth, the Kachāri kings came under the vassalage of the Ahom kings. The Kachāris shifted their capital from Dimāpur, first to Milebang and then to Khaspur. During the reigns of the subsequent Ahom kings, many skirmishes took place between the two tribes. Severe battles took place during the reigns of king Shusenpha and Rudra Singha (1696-1714). During this period, the Kachāri rule was wiped out of the whole Brahmanputra valley. While Rudra Singha was ruling, the Kachāri king Tamradhvaja threw off the yoke of the supremacy of the Ahoms and declared himself independent.

In the year 1706 A.D., the Ahom king Rudra Singha dispatched two batches of armies by two different routes to attack the Kachāris. The Kachāri king then fled away only to face still a grimmer fate. He was imprisoned by the Jayanti king by a Stratagem. The Kachari king managed to send a letter conveying his misfortune to the Ahom Monarch Rudra Singha, imploring his assistance for rescue. This time king Rudra Singha compelled both the
Kachāri and the Jayantia kings to acknowledge the supremacy of the Ahom king by personally subjugating them at the feet of the king in his court at camp Biswanāth (according to Gait at Salā).

Towards the last part of the Ahom rule when they became weak due to the Moāmaria insurrections and Burmese invasions, the Manipur and the Burmese. At last, the areas under the Kachāri rule in the Nowzong district came under the British rule in A.D. 1826 and the Kachār Zilla in 1854 A.D..

Both the Hedāmbial and the Sadāp family of Kachāri kings had supernatural stories about their origin like the Ahoms and others which bespeak the birth of their first ancestor through supernatural accidents. The Hedāmbial Kachāri kings trace their origin to Ghototkacha, the son of Bhima, through his non-Aryan wife Hidimba. It is true that the Kachāris came under the influence of Hinduism, very late. However, it cannot be denied that some sort of influence of the Saiva cult of Hinduism were upon them since a very long time. The Kachāris left behind numerous cities and towns which though in ruins, bear testimony to the architectural and sculptural accomplishments. It is believed that Mahamanikya, under whose patronage Madhav Kandali translated into verses the whole of Rāmāyana in the 14th century, was a Kachāri king. During the reign of the Ahom king Shuhungmung, many Kachāris were incorporated into the Chutia clan of the Ahom community. There were many professional people among the Kachāris and most of the gold washers, known as 'Sonowals', appointed by the Ahom kings, were Kachāris. The Kachari kings had matrimonial and diplomatic relations with the Ahom kings.
The Ahoms are a section of the Thai-Chinese people who entered into Assam through the mountain passes of eastern Assam, under the leadership of one Sukapha, in 1228 A.D. and established a small kingdom in the eastern region of Assam known as Saumarpitha with his headquarter at Charaideo by defeating the local inhabitants of the place, such as, the Nagas, the Barahis and the Morans. In the 'Yogini Tantra', the Ahoms are called 'Saumuras' and in other historical and biographical works they are referred to as 'Acam', 'Acam', 'Asam' etc., an elaborate discussion of which is already made. At first, their kingdom extended up to the river Dikhau, whence the entire valley on the south bank of the Brahmaputra, up to the eastern boundary of the modern district of Kamrup, was under the sway of the Kacharis. The Ahoms, in order to extend their domains, had to engage themselves in constant conflicts with the Naras, the Kacharis, the Nagas, the Chutias, and the Bhuyan Chieftains. We have shown in the foregoing discussions how the Ahoms subdued all these petty chiefs one after another and succeeded in establishing a large kingdom on the ruins of the old Kamarupa, from Sadia in the east to the river Manaha in the west, and the credit for all these, should be rendered to the Ahom king Shuhungmung. He virtually became the monarch of a vast territory extending from Sadia in the east up to the river Kortoya in the west, by smashing the Mohammedan army sent by the Nawab of Gauda under the leadership of Turbak and driving them beyond the river Kortoya. Subsequently the Koch king Biswa Singha was forced to remain as a vassal under the Ahom king. But the limits of their territories did not remain the same throughout the whole period of their rule. The area including the modern districts
of Kamrup and Goalpara, proved to be a bone of contention between the Ahoms and the Moguls during this period. The Moguls invaded Assam, as many as seventeen times, but they succeeded thrice to bring under their control the districts of Kamrup and Goalpara, and only on few occasions the Moguls could advance up to the eastern boundary of the modern district of Kamrup. In the reign of Jayadhvaja Singha (A.D. 1648-1663) the Ahoms extended their kingdom up to the river Sonkos, the present western boundary of Goalpara district; but it was only for a short time. After a lapse of about three years, the Moguls under the command of Mirjumla led an expedition to Assam and proceeded up to Garfaon. The Ahom king Jayadhvaja Singha was compelled to pay tribute to the Mogul Emperor of Delhi. But soon after Jayadhvaja, during the reign of his successors Chakradhvaja Singha (A.D. 1663-1669) and Udayaditya (1667 to 1673), the Mohammedans were driven out of Kamrup and the boundary of the Ahom kingdom was extended up to the Hadirā - opposite to Goalpara, after heavy loss of men and money being inflicted on the Moguls. But, during the reign of Sudaipha (A.D. 1677-1679), the Barphukan of Gauhati, with a malicious design to be the king of Assam, entered into a treasonable pact with the Nawab of Bengal and surrendered Gauhati to the Moguls. The Barphukan then proceeded to Kaliābar. King Gadadhar Singha (A.D. 1681-1696) after ascending the throne marched against the Moguls with an army and drove them beyond the river Manāhā. This was the last expedition of the Moguls and henceforth both the parties accepted the river Manāhā as the boundary between them, in A.D. 1682. Since 1682 this boundary continued to exist till the year 1826 A.D. when the rule of the country passed to the hands of the Britishers.

It is very clear now that it was the Ahoms who lifted the curtain after the eclipse of the glory of old Kamrup kings and resuscitated...
the lost political unity. Particularly king Shuhungmung is accredited with having consolidated the Ahom power all over Assam and up to the river Koro-toya in the west. Under Prasad Singha who ruled from 1603 to 1641, the state came to be thoroughly organised and efficiently administered and a sound economic policy was introduced with the help of Momai Tamuli Borbarua, the chief Executive Officer of the Ahom Government. The last and the most powerful Ahom king was Rudra Singha (A.D. 1696-1714), whose rule saw the country at its best culturally and politically. After the death of Rudra Singha, the Ahom power began to decline as a result of the civil war, known as 'Moamaria Bidroh' which culminated during the reign of king Laksminath Singha (A.D. 1769-1780) and Gaurinath Singha (A.D. 1790-1795). The reign of king Chandra Kanta Singha (1810-1818) was marked by a fatal feud between the Prime Minister Purnananda Buragohain and Badan Chandra, the Barohukon of Gauhati. Badan escaped to Burma with a view to obtaining military aid and subsidy to launch a full-scale invasion against Assam in order to punish his antagonist Purnananda. The Burmese invaded Assam three times, when they attacked the territories under British protection, the British got alerted and inflicted crushing defeats on them at several engagements. The Burmese were then forced to hand over the administration of Assam to the hands of the British. The British, however, set up Purandar Singha as a nominal king, whose rule terminated in 1838. With the termination of Purandar Singha's rule in 1838 a new rule with a new administrative machinery, imported from the far west set its foot on this land.

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