Chapter 4

Relations of the Vassal Kingdoms

The history of the origin of the vassal kingdoms show that they were ethnocentric. The kingdoms emerged basically under tribal chiefs and were primarily inhabited by the various tribes. Sometimes a group of kingdoms belonged to the same tribe and this was due to the partition of the original kingdom or due to their expansion. On the basis of their origin the kingdoms can be divided into five major groupings. The tribe-wise grouping of the kingdoms is as follows,

1. The Tiwa (Lalung) kingdoms, more than 13,
2. The Mikir (Karbi) kingdoms, more than 3,
3. The Kachari kingdoms, more than 3,
4. The Garo kingdoms, more than 11, and
5. The Koch kingdoms, more than 5.

1. The Tiwa (Lalung) Kingdoms

2. The Mikir (Karbi) kingdoms

![Diagram of the Tiwa and Mikir kingdoms]
3. The Kachari Kingdoms

Mayang Kumoi- Kacharigaya Bhuragaon- Pabhakati

4. The Garo Kingdoms

Tarani Ghagua Rani Luki Barduar Chaygaon Pantan Mairapur

Bholagaon Boko Samaria

5. The Koch Kingdoms

Darrang Dandua Khukhnagog Beltola Boge

As has been shown above the vassal kingdoms were ethno- centric. The first grouping has 13 Tiwa kingdoms. These kingdoms were lying on the foothills of the Jaintiya Hills. The Ahoms, among others, called them 'Dantiporia' kingdoms after they were brought under their vassalage.¹

Originally they had been under the various Jaintiya Chiefs.² According to Sarma Thakur, "After the defeat of the Kacharis by the Ahoms, the Jayntias extended their kingdom to the Kalang and kapili on the northeastern side of Nagaon district. The Jayantia king established the chiefs of the Lalungs in this area as Tributary Chiefs. Among these chiefs Gobha became prominent who ruled from Marjong. Other titular chiefs were Neli, Sahari, and Khala. The Lalungs of the plains areas of the Brahmaputra valley generally mention about 'Dantir Charibhai'. Under the Jayantia king Ramsingha, four brothers were ruling in Gobha, Neli, Khala and Sahari as tributary heads."³ The Lalungs left the
Jaintiya Hills because of the prevalence of the matrilineal/matriarchal system as well as the practice of human sacrifice. The Lalung Chiefs paid tributes to the Jaintiyas and provided facilities for trade with the plains people. The impact of the Jaintiya social customs and traditions are still there among the people as well as in the families of the ruling chiefs. The ruling chiefs of all these kingdoms had belonged to the Tiwa (Lalung) tribe, a branch of the Tibeto-Burman race.

Dimorua and several others came and made their submission to the Ahom king Pratap Singha in the year 1616 A.D.

As they belonged to the same tribe the ruling chiefs had closer socio-political and socio-cultural relations among themselves. They had been under the influence of the matriarchal family norms as did the Jaintiyas. Their system of marriage was the same as that of the Jaintiyas. In a Government publication it is said about the Lalungs thus, “...the Lalungs have twelve clans which are named after the places where they lived in originally.... Lalung clans are strictly exogamous. Though marriage through negotiation is the usual practice they prefer marriage by elopement. Child marriages are unknown among them and polygamy is not common. A widow can remarry and can claim the hand of her deceased husband’s brother. The Lalungs originally formed a matrilineal group and continue to be so even today in the hills.”

Later on a section of the Tiwa chiefs started to raise their voice of to the matriarchal family system and established separate kingdoms under the tutelage of the Ahoms. The ruling chiefs, particularly belonging to Dimorua fleeing from their original place of habitat, reported to the Ahom officials serving under the
Rahial Baruah that the sons of king could not become king or succeed him to the throne and they were only fit for manual service, nor they could have ornaments of gold unless gifted by the king. The *Deodhai Asom Buranjii* has recorded this in the following words:

>'দাতিয়লীরাই আহোম দেশে অহাব কাহান]'—বহাব দেশায় বন্দর দেব আজারে সোলে, 

—”আ’ দায়িমালে তাহতে নে দেব দেশায় কি নিমিতে আহিহাছ?” দাতিয়লালে বোলে, ”দেবু, আমি কি নিমিতে আহিহাছ, আমায় দেশায় বাজায় পো বাজা হব নাপাই। আম বাজায় পো হবলে চাকর খাটুর পাই। আরো সোশা বজা দিশে পিন্দির পাই, বাজায় বিদিল পিন্দির নাপাই। পিন্দি-লেও হাত- কান কাটি নিয়ে এবং অসমানীয় দেশ জামি তিরাসিঃ এবি আহিহাছ। আ’ ইশখ্যদেব 

সমানী বুরিগুলি গুনিয়ে লোপ- চাঁদ সুমাবি আহিহাছ।” ববরা বোলে, ”আ, বাক বাবািত, দাতিয়লালত সোশা, তাহতে বন্দর বাজায় পো-চা আছে নাই।” মিকিয়ে বোলে, —আমাক বংশায় পো বাজাকুল, 

বাজা হব পাই।” তেতিয়লাল ববরাই ববািতক আজা কবিল, বোলে,—”দেব আজা শনাই বাজা 

পরস্পরে।’চাকায়ল ববরাই দেব আজা শনাই বাজা পাতিলে।

While the ruling chiefs of these kingdoms hailed primarily from the Tiwa tribe their subjects were of mixed nature. There were Koches, Muslims, Hindus, Garos, Jaintiyas and Khasis.

Dimorua became converted into a Mikir kingdom by the time of the Ahom king Rudra Singha, 1696-1714. After the death of the reigning king of Dimorua in the battle against the Mughals, the Ahoms made the son of Dhararengpo’ the king of that kingdom. The son has been identified with Repong- a prince of the Mikir chief. 

There had been three Karbi (Mikir) kingdoms- Mikirgaya, Dimorua and Panbari. The three chiefs of the Mikir tribe besides maintaining social and political relations with the neighbouring tribal kingdoms of the same nature and
status also maintained close relations among themselves. A prince of the Dimorua king was made the king of Panbari. It may be during the reign of Ahom king Chakradhvaj Singha (1663-69) that the Dimorua prince was made the king of Panbari. Because Panbari as a vassal kingdom came to be known since his reign.¹¹

Bahudhar Konwar - another prince of Dimorua - who fled his kingdom because of some illicit relations with a girl belonging to his own clan, was made the king of Dandua by the ministers (Four Thakurias) of that kingdom. The genealogy of the Khukhnagog kings refers to the incident in the following manner,¹²

Marrimonial relations existed between the royal families of the kingdoms of Baghara and Dandua. Mangal Singha - the king of Baghara - gave his daughter in marriage to Supardhvaj - the prince of Dandua and made him king of Khukhnagog - a part of his kingdom. Just before the marriage, Mangal Singha told Makardhvaj that they would remain friendly and would have no bad blood between the two families since then.¹³
The king of Tarani gave in marriage his daughter to Keshasal - the prince of Baghara and thus these two kingdoms also came to have a family compact. In this marriage the king of Tarani gave Silsako as dowry to Keshasal and the latter became the king of that kingdom immediately after his marriage. 14

Ranjoy Konwar - the prince of Damal kingdom - after his Jaintiya campaign during the reign of Ahom king Rudra Singha was crowned as the king of Tetelia. Before being made the king of Tetelia the kings of Tarani and Kumoi gave their daughters in marriage to Ranjoy Konwar, renamed as Ranasiddha Konwar. The kingdom of Tetelia was curved out of the kingdoms of Tarani and Kumoi. Thus the three kings and their kingdoms were united by matrimonial alliance. 15

Deval Kumar - the king of Devalpur - after being defeated by Nileswar Sing - the king of Neli - established matrimonial relations with the royal family of Neli. The former gave in marriage his daughter Renu to Nandan - the prince of Neli. 16

Nileswar Sing - the king of Neli gave in marriage his daughter to Juddhajit - his commander - in - chief, and with a view to making him king he parted away a portion of his kingdom. The newly created kingdom since then under Juddhajit came to be known as Sarugharia kingdom while the original kingdom as Bargharia. 17

Matrimonial relations also existed between the royal house of Mayang and Beltola. Padmabati - the princess of Mayang - was married to the prince Beltola. 18
The princess of Damal kingdom was given in marriage to Sargat Sing, the king of Uttar Khola kingdom.19

Thus it is seen that the vassal kingdoms were connected with each other by matrimonial alliances. The royal houses thus being connected through matrimonial alliances were a source of strength as well as co-operation for mutual survival of the kings as well as their subjects.

It is important here to mention that the vassal kingdoms under the Ahoms also had their own vassal kingdoms. It is interesting to note that these kingdoms came into being as a result of the division of the original kingdoms due to the increase of population. Such kingdoms were like states within state. As a matter of fact, the vassal kingdoms themselves were states within the Ahom state. These kingdoms were originally subordinate to the original kingdoms but subsequently the break-away kingdoms became independent of the original kingdom.

The kingdoms of Neli, Khola and Sahari were originally under Gobha. Three other kingdoms under Gobha were Marjong, Baghjap and Devalpur.20 Neli had two dependent kingdoms, viz., Sarugharia Rajya and Damal.21 Khola had one dependent kingdom and it was Uttar Khola.

The kingdom of Kumoi underwent a partition nearly 25 generations after its origin and a separate kingdom emerged under the name of Baghara. Its king was Jakangka or Jungalbalahu. The original kingdom-Kumoi- remained under Mrikangka.22 The kingdom of Baghara again became divided into three separate kingdoms under three princes of Bhog Singha, known as Silshako, Ulubari and Manipur. Thus the number of vassal kingdoms under Kumoi increased to four. The Mani Konwarar Akhyan has the following to say in this regard, 23
Tarani also had a vassal kingdom under the name of Ghagua. The kingdom of Dandua had two dependent kingdoms, viz., Bhurbandha and Marigaon.\textsuperscript{24}

The Mikirgaya kingdom had three dependent kingdoms, viz., Charaibahi, Pagsali and Mikirbheta.\textsuperscript{25}

The kingdom of Barepujia had one dependent kingdom and it was known as Kakmari.

The kingdom Tupakuchia had four dependent kingdoms, Khaigarh, Sorah, Salmara and Dhing.\textsuperscript{26}

Mayang had one dependent kingdom and it was called Bhuragaon-Pabhakati.\textsuperscript{27}

Boge had two dependent kingdoms, viz., Oauphula and Bangaon.\textsuperscript{28}
The vassal king of Darrang had established seven subordinate chief­tainships over seven duars, i.e., passes leading to the plains from the Bhutan Hills and that of Aka and Dafla Hills in the north, known as Sat- rajas.29

In this way it is seen that under the Ahoms the political formations in Assam had three different types of kingdoms, (i) the Ahom kingdom, (ii) the vassal kingdoms and (iii) the dependent kingdoms of the vassal kingdoms. Thus the Ahoms had a three- tire political formations in Assam. All these kingdoms were semi- tribal and semi- feudal in nature and character.

Notes and References


2 Bhuyan, S.K., ed., Asom Buranji (Sukumar Mahanta), DHAS, Guwahati, 1988, 3rd edn., p. 46

3 Thakur, G.C. Sarma, The Lalungs (Tiwas), Tribal Research Institute, Guwahati, 1985, p. 3

4 Ibid., p. 6; Gait, Edward, A History of Assam, 1905, LBS Publications, 1984 reprint, p. 8. Gait appears to have wrongly identified the Lalungs as the Karbis.


Barooah, D.P., ed., Assam District Gazetteers, Nowgong District, Govt. of Assam, 1978, p. 120, emphasis added. Also see, Thakur, op. cit., p. 6

Bhuyan, S.K., ed., Deodhai Asom Buranji, pp. 133-34

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Deka, Lakshmi Singh, Mani Konwarar Akhyan, Part-II, Marigaon, 1971, pp. 50-51

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Deka, Lakshmi Singh, op. cit., p. 7


Deka, Lakshmi Singh, op. cit., pp. 51 & 65


Deka, Jagat Singh, op. cit., pp. 8 & 13


27 Ibid., Part-II, p.44
