CHAPTER VIII

RECEPTIONS OF ENVOYS

The Reception of Foreign Envoys by the Ahom Government

The lengthy process of reception of foreign envoys visiting the Ahom kingdom started with their arrival at its frontier. While coming to the Ahom kingdom, all foreign missions followed certain routes and had to enter the kingdom at certain points at which the Ahom Government maintained frontier officials. For instance, all the missions to and from their brother kings in the Shan States of Burma such as M"ong-kang (Mogaung, known as Nara country of the Assamese chronicles), M"ong-mit (Momit) and M"ong-M"ao followed the land route passing through the Kham-jang valley across the Pat-kai range. This route was placed under the Governor of Kham-jang, better known in the Assamese chronicles as the Khamjangiya Gohain. Known as the Kham-jang route, also called the Pat-kai route, it had been in use from the thirteenth till the end of the eighteenth centuries when it became unsafe due to the disturbances caused by the Singphos and the Moamariyas. As a result the envoys to the Ahom kingdom

1A-B,p.147.

from the Shan States at the beginning of the nineteenth century
took another route, but more circuitous and difficult, which
lay further north of Kham-jang. It was connected with Mahang
to the east of Sadiya which fell within the jurisdiction of
the Sadiyakhowa Gohain. Thus, the last two embassies from
Möng-kang which visited Jorhat, the then Ahom capital during
the reign of Kamalesvar Singha followed the Mahang route instead
of the Kham-jang route.3

During the sixteenth century all missions to and from
the Kachari kingdom and the kingdom of Manipur had followed
the land route that passed through Marangi in the Dhansiri
valley.4 It was placed under the charge of Thao-möng Marangi,
or Marangikhowa Gohain in Assamese, and all missions coming
from and going to these states had been handled by him. With
the expansion of the Ahom kingdom in the seventeenth century,
the Marangi route was largely abandoned in preference to other
convenient route lying further west through Raha which was
placed under Rahiyal Barua.5 In the same way, communications
with the Jayantiya kingdom were maintained by the routes passed

3Tu.B, pp. 141-142, 143.
4KB, p. 20.
through Jagi and Kajalimukh which were under Jagiyaliya Gohain and Kajalimukhiya Gohain respectively. As these places lay under the jurisdiction of the Governor of Lower Assam, whose headquarters was first at Kajalimukh then shifted to Gauhati, all envoys entering the Ahom kingdom by these routes had to present their credentials to him. It was he, who processed all the formalities for the visits of the Mughal envoy to the Ahom kingdom.

The communications with Bengal and other states on the west had been maintained chiefly by way of the Brahmaputra. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries all communications with Bengal including those with the East India Company were maintained through the frontier outpost at Jogighopa known as Hadira Chauki or Assam Chauki, which was situated at the confluence of the river Manaha with the Brahmaputra. The frontier station was administered by a Duariya Barua under the Barphukan of Gauhati. The envoys coming from the west had first to report the Duariya Barua, who would intimate the information to the Barphukan. In the same way, the hill tribes, who had their relations with the Ahom Government had also been allotted their fixed routes and gates (duar). Any messenger

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6 Ibid.; ibid.
8 HA, p.275; AAR, p.50, footnote no.75; Pracin Bangla Patra Sankalan, L.No.29, p.37.
sent by them had to enter the Ahom kingdom through the assigned duars. Accordingly, they were first received by the officers of these duars.

It was the usual custom of the part of the foreign envoys on their regular missions to the Ahom kingdom to come in company with the Ahom envoys returning from their kingdom. But foreign envoys came by themselves when they visited the Ahom kingdom, for the first time or after a break of the diplomatic relations. If they accompanied other persons like the traders, travelling mendicants, religious persons, permission for their entry was refused. Thus during the reign of king Siu-sengphā, Bajit Khan and Gopal, the two envoys deputed by the Nawab of Dacca, were refused the permission to enter the Ahom kingdom because they came with three Assam mudoi (merchants), who had been to Dacca on a trading trip. The three merchants namely Jayhari, Narahari, Sonari were later arrested and finally executed along with 20 of their assistants (pāiks) engaged by the merchants for bringing foreign envoys with them.

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10 KB, pp. 39-40.
11 AB(SM), p. 55 puts it as Bajio Khan.
13 Ibid.; ibid.; ibid. Their bodies had been put on a raft and were left floated on the Brahmaputra.
On receipt of the information of the arrival of the envoys of a foreign state at the frontier of the Ahom kingdom in case they were coming for the first time to establish new relations or to renew relations after a break, the Ahom officer in-charge of the frontier outpost (chauki), or the chaukiyal ascertained the identification of the envoys and the purpose of their visit.\(^14\) Thereafter, he sent the information to his superior, the officer in-charge of the district, who relayed the same to the governor of the province.\(^15\) If the envoys came from eastern states such as Mông-kang, Mông-mit, or other Shan States by the Kham-jang route across the Pat-kai, the information was sent to the Governor of the Kham-jang.\(^16\) If they came from Bengal or other kingdoms such as Bhutan, Kachari or Jayantiya the information was sent to the Barphukan,\(^17\) the Governor of Lower Assam who then relayed the message to the capital and waited for the royal instruction.\(^18\) The king after having had discussions with the three great Gohains sent his instruction to the governor.\(^19\) The governor sent the royal

\(^{14}\text{KB, pp.13-14.}\)
\(^{15}\text{Ibid., pp.41-42.}\)
\(^{16}\text{A-B, p.147.}\)
\(^{17}\text{PAB, p.91; KB, p.40; Tu.B, pp.145-146.}\)
\(^{18}\text{Ibid., pp.91-92; ibid.}\)
\(^{19}\text{Ibid.; ibid.; ibid.}\)
message to the chaukiyal, through the district officer. It was thus under instruction of the king alone that an embassy was received or refused entry.

Foreign missions coming to the Ahom kingdom had always to observe certain formalities. It was the duty of the provincial governor to ascertain whether the foreign envoys had come after observing such formalities as were required of them. If a foreign mission was found to have been deficient in observing the formalities it was sent back after informing it of the formalities it would have to observe.\textsuperscript{20} This was, however, always done under the express direction of the king. Thus, it was under instruction of the king that General Kangseng, who was also the Governor of Marangi, sent back the Kachari envoy Sadar Dalai of Demera from the frontier with instruction to come with presents next time.\textsuperscript{21} In case of renewal of the relations, even if the foreign envoys failed to comply with all the formalities, the Ahom king allowed the frontier governor to receive them and to send them back after giving them instructions about the prevailing practices and customs.\textsuperscript{22} Thus on instructions from king Jaydhvaj Singha, Sandikai Barphukan, the Governor of Lower Assam, received the

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{20}KB, pp.13-14.
\item\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., p.14.
\item\textsuperscript{22}Ibid., pp.34, 39-40.
\end{footnotes}
two Kachari envoys, Camatakata and Satgaonya Patar, who had been deputed by their ruler to initiate process so as to renew the friendly relations between the two kingdoms, and then sent them back to their country after informing them of the formalities that should observe if they were to come next time so as to have an interview with the Ahom Svargadeo and his ministers and to renew the friendship.\textsuperscript{23} The envoys were, however, allowed to proceed to the royal capital and were duly received by the ministers and the king if they had observed the established norms and procedures even though they were visiting the Ahom kingdom for the first time.\textsuperscript{24} Thus, Rupabar and Ruprai, the Jayantiya envoys, were sent to Garhgaon, the capital of the Ahom king and were duly received by the king and the three ministers.\textsuperscript{25}

In case of the regular visit of foreign envoys, who normally accompanied the Ahom envoys, the chaukiyal on the Ahom side of the frontier, on receipt of the information from his counterpart on the other side, informed his superior in-charge of district.\textsuperscript{26} The latter, who was, in most cases, a barua, conveyed the message to the governor of the province, who then

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23}KB, pp. 30, 40.
\item \textsuperscript{24}JB, p. 14.
\item \textsuperscript{25}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{26}KB, pp. 41-42.
\end{itemize}
instructed the district officer to receive the foreign envoys together with their own envoys, and to provide them with accommodation in camp and to supply provisions. At the same time the governor quickly despatched his messengers to inform his monarch of the arrival of the envoys and waited for royal order. Accordingly, the chaukiyal escorted the envoys to the camp and informed the governor, who also raised a new camp nearby his headquarters to accommodate the envoys. In the next stage the envoys were brought to the governor's camp, and if the distance was long, they were kept in camps on the way. For instance Camatakata and Satgaonya Patar, the two Kachari envoys, who came during the reign of Jaydhvaj Singh, when were brought from Raha to the headquarters of the Barphukan, they were kept at camps at four places namely Khagarijan, Misa, Ketekidubi and Kaliyabar, and at every place they were provided with provisions.

A day was fixed for the reception of the envoys by the governor in his court. On that day the court was arranged in grand way, and all the officers of his court were present.

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27 Ibid.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
in their proper attire. The army units were also kept in battle formation. When everything was ready, the envoys were escorted to the court of the governor where they were presented and introduced to the governor by an officer. Since it was not the custom on the part of the governor to have direct conversation with any foreign envoys but through an intermediary officer, all enquiries or questions asked to the envoys were conveyed to them by that officer, and in the same way the answers of the envoys to the questions were also conveyed to the governor by him. After introducing of the envoys to the governor, usual questions were put to them about the well being of their ruler, the purpose of their visit, the time of their departure and arrival. Their answers were relayed by the officer to the governor. Thereafter the letter addressed to the governor, and the articles of presents that were sent by the foreign ruler, were handed over to the officer. The letter was opened and read by another officer, who was well conversed in the language in which it was written. The envoys were then asked by the governor whether any verbal message had been sent by their king. If they had any, they

32 KB, p.61.
33 Tu.B, p.152.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid., pp.44,142,146,147; KB, p.33.
36 Ibid., p.152; JB, p.68.
37 Ibid.; ibid.
38 Ibid.; ibid.
conveyed it to him through the officer. If the letter or the message was not found in proper order or a departure from the usual norms the envoys were charged in the open court, and in extreme cases they were even driven out of the court. The two Kachari envoys, Ujan Dalai and Kasinath, who carried a defective letter and message of their king had received such a treatment at the Barbarua's court who was then Governor of the frontier province. Sometimes in 1650 at the court of the Barbarua, the Jayantiya envoy, Ruprai, delivered a verbal message of his king, Yasamattarai, which stated that so long he received five letters from the Ahom Government written by the king, the three ministers and the governor, but the Ahom king received only one letter from him. He, therefore, proposed that henceforth he would write only one letter to the king, and his ministers would write separately to the ministers of the Ahom court and his brother, the Governor of Nartong, to the Ahom Governor. Finding this message to have exceeded the authority of the Jayantiya ruler, Ruprai, on the royal order, was sent back from Kaliyabar, the then headquarters of the Ahom Governor, without providing any escort letter. If the letter addressed to the frontier governor

\[39\] KB, p.31. This occurred during the reign of Siu-seng-phâ.

\[40\] He was, then, the Governor of the frontier province through whose jurisdiction the Ahom envoys passed when they went to the Jayantiya kingdom.

\[41\] JB, p.20.
was found to be in proper order and to have fulfilled all the requirements, it was read and its contents noted. At the end of the reception, an officer brought in areca-nut, betel-leaves and flowers on a tray and placed before the court, this marked the end of the proceedings in the court. The envoys were then taken back to their camp.

A few days later, the envoys were provided with transportation and escort to take them to the Ahom capital. While on their way, camps were provided and provisions were supplied to the envoys by the officers through whose territorial jurisdiction they passed. During the reign of Jaydhvaj Singha the Kachari envoys, on their way to the Ahom capital from Kaliyabar, stayed at Sala, Aongiya, Lakhow, Dergaon, Gajpur, Janjimukh and Nam-dang before reaching Garhgaon. On their arrival at a little distance from the capital, the envoys were accommodated in a camp outside the capital and provisions were supplied to them. According to the custom, at the initial stage, the envoys were supplied provisions on behalf of the Bargohain till the latter received the envoys in his court. Thereafter, they were supplied with provisions on behalf of the Barpatragohain till he received the envoys in his court.

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42 Ibid., pp. 69, 76, 77; KB, p. 63.
43 TB, p. 7; KB, pp. 42-43.
44 KB, p. 42.
and finally they were supplied articles on behalf of the Bura-gohain till he received them. Accordingly Bargohain received the envoys first followed by the Barpatragohain and then by the Buragohain in their respective courts separately on dif-ferent dates. 45

On the day fixed for reception of the envoys by a minister, his court was given a fresh decoration. In accordance with the customary practices all the officers subordinate to him and also the priests, in their proper attirement, and the army officers with their contingents were present in the court in their respective places. When all these arrangements were complete, the minister took his seat. 46 Thereafter, at his direction, the envoys with the letter and the articles of presents sent to him as presents were brought to his court.

After paying due obeisance by bowing their heads to the minis-ter, the envoys took their seats allotted for them. The envoys were, thereafter, introduced to the minister by one of his offi-cers, who also made enquiries, on behalf of the minister, about the purpose of the visit and the well-being of the ruler, whom they represented and also about the journey they just undertook. 47

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45 KB, p. 55; PAB, p. 131. Arun Chandra Barua, however, says that the Barbarua supplied them food on the first day and the three Gohains on the three succeeding days. On the next four days the same procedure was followed. We have not come across such reference in the chronicles. The Administrative System of the Ahoms, an unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Gauhati University, p. 197.

46 Tu.B, p. 146.

47 Ibid.
The officer then conveyed the answers of the envoys to the minister. When the preliminaries were over, the letter addressed to the minister which was already placed on a sarāi (raised tray) was read by an officer assigned for the purpose. If the letter did not conform to the customary rules and procedures the envoys had to face very awkward position. After reading the letter the envoys were asked to convey, if they carried any, verbal message.48

On the completion of all the ceremonies of reception, an officer brought in areca-nut, betel-leaves, flower and sandal-wood paste on a sarāi (raised tray) and placed before them. This was the signal for the end of the proceedings. The envoys were sent back to their camps, but before they left the court they paid due obeisance to the minister.49

This was followed by the turn of the next minister to maintain the envoys and to supply provisions until they were received by him. The reception of the envoys by him followed the same form and style, when the envoys presented the letter and articles of presents.50

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Tu.B, p. 172.
If one of the ministers happened to be out of the capital on important business, the envoys were sent there to be received by him. Thus in 1663, the Jayantiya envoy, Ramai, when he visited the Ahom kingdom, was sent to Aoliya to be received by the Buragohain.\(^{51}\)

After the receptions of the ministers were complete it was the turn of the monarch to maintain and receive the envoys. In the meantime, arrangements were made to receive the envoys at the royal court. If the envoys were from a tributary ruler, they were received at a temporary court outside the capital,\(^{52}\) but if they were sent by an independent ruler they were received at the permanent court.\(^{53}\) King Jaydhvaj Singha received the envoys from Jayantiya ruler, subordinate to him on boats at the dockyard outside his capital Garhgaon\(^{54}\); and the envoys from Tripura, an independent kingdom, were received by Rudra Singha at his permanent court at the capital.\(^{55}\)

The royal reception was a grand occasion and the court assumed a gala appearance with various decorations. All the officers, both high and low including the ministers, royal

\(^{52}\)AB(SKD), p.30.  
\(^{54}\)AB(SKD), p.3.  
\(^{55}\)TB, p.9.
priests, in their proper attirement were summoned and took their respective seats.\textsuperscript{56} During Rajesvar Singha reign, in the reception of the envoys from Nara, "The three Dangariyas (Gohains) as well as the Barbarua, Phukans, Rajkhowas, Camuas Phukans, Baruas, Hajarikas were ordered to attend the function in their turbans, cloaks according to their ranks. The Saikaias, Baras, and paiks of the Kenris were also ordered to appear in ceremonial costumes."\textsuperscript{57} In the reception of envoys from more important states, the frontier governors, who normally resided in the frontier headquarters were, too, summoned and were presented in the court as in the reception of envoys sent by Mirja Jahina in 1629.\textsuperscript{58} Contingents of the army, infantry, cavalry and elephantry were kept in full battle forma­
tion.\textsuperscript{59} When all the arrangements were complete the king took his seats on the throne to receive the envoys.\textsuperscript{60} The envoys, who had already been informed about the royal reception,\textsuperscript{61} were taken from their camp to a place nearer to the reception

\textsuperscript{56}Tu.B, p.51.
\textsuperscript{57}Ibid., p.46.
\textsuperscript{58}PAB, p.171.
\textsuperscript{59}Tu.B, pp.46,152.
\textsuperscript{60}AB(HB), p.101.
\textsuperscript{61}The information of the reception was normally given on the previous day. JB, pp.67-68.
council from where they were provided with transport by the king. The envoys from Tripura were brought to the court on horse when they appeared before Rudra Singha.⁶² On the king's command, they were brought to the court with the letter and the articles of present sent by their king. On reaching the entrance of the royal court, the envoys were asked to remove their shoes, and surrender all arms, if they were carrying any, for no-one was allowed to carry arms and shoes into the royal court.⁶³ While proceeding to the court building, where the king was sitting, they paid their due obeisance to the king at seven different points.⁶⁴ On all these occasions, the letter which they were carrying, was transferred to other accompanying persons.⁶⁵ Thereafter they took their seats at the appointed place in the court after paying obeisance seven times to the king and placing the letter on a raised tray.⁶⁶

The envoys were introduced to the king by an officer of the king.⁶⁷ On the royal direction, the officer, who was assigned to act as intermediary, after paying due obeisance to the king at three places, he enquired, on behalf of the king, the

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⁶²TB, p.10.
⁶³AB(HB), pp.100-106.
⁶⁴TB, p.10.
⁶⁵JB, p.51.
⁶⁶Tu.B, p.158.
⁶⁷TB, pp.10-11; Tu.B, pp.142,147.
envoys about the health of their king and other members of his family. After getting the answer given by the envoys, the officer returned in the same manner and relayed the reply along with the question to the king. Then the officer was directed by the monarch to convey his wishes of the well-being of the foreign king; the officer did it in same manner. Again the officer went to the envoys and asked them about the journey they undertook and the purpose of their visit to the Ahom kingdom. Their replies were relayed to the king. An instance of how questions were asked to the foreign envoys and how their answers were conveyed to the Ahom monarch by the Majundar Barua during the reign of Kamalesvar Singha is given below.

In this case, the foreign envoys came from Bhutan and their names were Jiva, Dindu, Khupa, Burukdewa; they were presented and introduced to the king by the Choladhara Phukan of the Chiring family. Majundar Barua as directed by the king, after paying his due obeisance at three different points, asked the envoys from Bhutan thus, "I have been commanded by His Majesty to enquire of Jiva, Dindu, Khupa and Burukdewa whether at the time of their departure the Deva-Dharma Raja was living in peace and prosperity, by protecting his subjects along with his Lamas, Jongpings, Jadungs, Tangchur Subhas and Gelans." Having heard this the envoys replied - "At the time of our

68 Ms.No.29.
departure the Deva-Dharma Raja was living in peace and plenty through the favour of Kali-Thakurani. We can not say what has transpired in the meantime. Majundar Barua returned in the same manner and conveyed thus - "As I was commanded by His Majesty, I enquired Jiva, Dindu, Khupa, Barukdewa, whether at the time of their departure the Deva-Dharma Raja was living in peace and prosperity, by protecting his subjects along with his Lamas, Jongpungs, Jadungs, Tangchur Subhas and Gelans", they replied like this, "At the time of our departure the Deva-Dharma Raja was living in peace and plenty through the favour of Kali-Thakurani. We can not say what has transpired in the meantime". The king then said, "It is also our desire that the Deva-Dharma Raja should live in happiness and prosperity."

He directed further enquiries as follows - "In which month did they leave their country? When did they reach Gauhati? How long it was since they arrived at this place?" Having heard this they replied, "We started from our country in the month of Pausa; in the month of Phalguna we reached the place under the jurisdiction of the Barpani Raja of Gauhati, and we arrived here in the month of Chaitra. We did not experience any danger or discomfort in our journey."

69 "The Barpani Raja of Gauhati", refers to the Barphukan at Gauhati.

70 Ms.No.29; Tu.B pp.147; JB pp.152-155. Free translation from Assamese.
After customary conversation, the envoys handed over the letter which was already placed on a raised tray addressed to the king through the Ahom officer. The cover of the letter was then removed, and the letter read by an officer assigned for the purpose. Usually such letters coming from the west were read by the Majundar Barua. But in some cases where the Majundar Barua was not conversant with the language, the letter was read by other officers. Thus we find the letter from the Tripura king to Rudra Singha was read by Kath Bhandari Barua. The letter from the king of Mong-kang to king Kamalesvar Singha was read by Chiring Phukan. After the letter was read, the envoys were asked to convey any verbal message that they might have brought from their king. The answer was relayed in the same manner as he did previously in the case of the letter. After this, on behalf of the king, the envoys were informed that the reply of the letter would be sent afterwards.

When all these were over, a trayfull of areca-nut, betel-leaves, flowers and sandal-wood paste were brought in and placed before the court, thus indicating the adjournment of

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71 AB(HB), p.123.
72 TB, p.11.
73 Tu. B, p.175.
74 Ms. No.29.
the court. 75 The envoys then left the court after paying due obeisance to the king seven times and proceeded to their camp. 76

The foreign envoys faced expulsion from the royal court for their failure to keep their commitments made on earlier visits or for not observing properly the existing customs and practices or for bringing defective letters or delivering messages that caused annoyance to His Majesty. The two Kachari envoys namely Majundar Barua and Cheliya Dalai were thrown out of the Ahom royal court of King Jaydhvaj Singha for their failure to fulfill certain commitments they made on an earlier visit. 77 In the same way, the Kachari envoys, Gandharvarai and Elabar, were driven out of the royal court of king Rudra Singha for bringing a defective letter from their king Tamradhvaj. 78

The foreign envoys were required to observe the certain rules, etiquettes of the Ahom court. If a foreign envoy declined to follow such norms, he was not received by the Ahom monarch. For instance, Chekmulk, the envoy of Rasid Khan, the Mughal Subedar of Kamrup, was not granted an interview by king Cakradhvaj Singha for he did not agree to pay due obeisance by bowing

75 AB(KTP), p. 85.
76 KB, p. 43.
77 Ibid., pp. 38-39; AB(SM), pp. 70-71.
78 Ibid., p. 64.
For bidding farewell to foreign envoys to their own country, a special court was held by the monarch in the same way as was done at the time of reception. They were summoned to the court where they were received with due honour and given their seats. The king announced through an intermediary officer the farewell of the envoys, informing them that the reply to the letter brought by them from their lord would be sent through his own envoys and that they were asked to convey the information to their lord. The envoys were, thereafter, offered customary presents on behalf of the monarch. The following articles were presented by Kamalesvar Singha to the Jayantiya envoys at the time of their departure in 1803. To envoy Ramcandra—a turban made of yellow coloured stuff; one cloak of greenish colour; one piece of patuka (or girdles), errings, a pair of bangles worked with gold in three places; rupees thirty as pocket money and one gold mohar. His two fellow envoys of junior rank were presented with cloaks, turbans, two-fold sheets and girdles made of cotton; they were also given errings, and rupees thirty-six for their pocket money.

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79 AB(SM), pp. 87-88.
80 KB, p. 43; Tu.B, pp. 155-156, 159-160.
Soon after, the three ministers, too, held their separate councils in accordance with precedance, to bid the foreign envoys farewell. It was now the turn of the Buragohain, followed by the Barpatragohain and finally the Bargohain. They informed the foreign envoys that the replies to the letters that they had carried would be sent through their own envoys. Each of the ministers offered gifts of articles to the envoys. When all these were over, the envoys were sent back to the frontier by the same route by which they came. On reaching the headquarters of the frontier province the envoys were again received by the frontier governor at his court to bid them farewell. They were informed that the reply to the letter that had been addressed to him would be sent through his own envoys. Thereafter, the envoys were taken to the frontier in the same way they had been brought in. At the outpost of the Ahom frontier the foreign envoys sent information to their own frontier officials of their return accompanied by the Ahom envoys. They would thus be escorted by their frontier officer.

Reception of Ahom Envoys in Foreign Courts

The Ahom envoys visiting foreign countries had been accorded

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82 *K.B.*, p. 43.
83 Ibid., p. 44.
84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
receptions by the foreign governments. Some such occasions are recorded in the chronicles. An account of reception received by the Ahom envoys in the Kachari kingdom as recorded in the Ahom chronicle runs thus:

As soon as the Ahom envoy along with the Kachari envoy arrived at Raha, the frontier station of the Ahom kingdom, the news of their arrival was sent to the frontier officer on the Kachari side. The Kachari frontier officer conveyed the message to the governor of the frontier province, who, on receiving the message, provided the envoys with transportation and escorted them to his headquarters. On the way, they were kept in camps at several places and supplied them with provisions. The governor received the Ahom envoys at his court with due formalities where they delivered articles as present sent by their king or the ministers or by the governor. It may be noted that it was not the custom on the part of the Ahom king and the ministers to address letters to the governors of a foreign country except those of the Mughals and the East India Company. There are only two letters attributed to have been sent by the Ahom king Jaydhvaj Singha to the Nartongiya Raja, the Governor of the frontier province of the Jayantiya kingdom. But it could not be ascertained whether these letters

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87 Ibid.
were actually sent by the Ahom king or the minister to the Governor of Nartong, because of the fact that, the address parts of the letters are not complete and the names and the titles of the senders are also not available.  

When the Ahom envoys, who were taken to the capital, had reached the vicinity of the capital they were provided with the appropriate means of transport and were taken to the capital, where they were provided with accommodation in camp built new, and also, supplied with foodstuffs at the interval of a few days. For instance, the Ahom envoys sent to Nawab Allyar Khan, sometime in 1641, were supplied with the following provisions after every 4 days: rice 20 maunds, masur 12 maunds, mug 2 maunds, mah 3 maunds, ghee 10 seers, jhaluk (black pepper) 10 pots, salt 2 maunds, betel-leaves 2 baskets, tatar 2 baskets, ginger 2 pots, fish 20 Nos., oil 4 vessels, sugar 46 seers, goat 2 Nos., molasses 2 pots.  

The Ahom envoys, who visited the Tripura capital sometime in 1711, received monthly provisions as follows: The two envoys received - 4 maunds of fine lahi rice, 10 seers of mug mah (gram), 15 seers of mati mah (gram), 12 seers of black gram, 10 seers of salt, 10 seers of oil, 6 seers of ghee.

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89 Ibid.
90 KB, p. 44.
91 Ka.B, p. 46.
3 seers of sugar, 12 seers of molasses, 2 seers of black pepper, 8 seers of ginger, 1 seer of turmeric, 1 seer of bhog jira (a kind of spice), 4 tolas of hing (asafoetida), 8 tolas of cardamon, 30 pairs of pigeons, $1\frac{3}{4}$ kaons of areca nut, 8 seers of tobacco. They also received daily 4 seers of buffaloe milk, 4 seers of fish, 4 loads of fuel, 4 pieces of betel-leaves. For their daily worship they received every day flower, tulsi, durba and leaves of bel tree. The thirty-four persons accompanying the envoys received the following articles per month: 34 maunds of coarse rice, 1½ maunds of mati mah (gram), ½ maund of black gram, 1½ maunds of salt, 34 seers of oil, 10 seers of unpowdered turmeric, 10 seers of Bhotan chilly, 34 seers of molasses, 20 seers of tobacco, 5 goats, 2 kaons of areca nut, 60 nos. of duck. A market was established for collecting other articles by them. They received daily 8 loads of fuel, 2 loads of leaves, 4 leaves of betel-leaves, 40 nos. of pots and vessels, 1 pot of lime after every 8 days. Besides, they were given the services of washermen, hair-cutters, and others.92

In the meantime, arrangements were being made to receive the envoys at the royal court. On the day previous to the day of reception, the envoys were informed about the reception of the following day and asked them to keep themselves in

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92TB, pp. 24-25.
readiness for the purpose. Since it was the custom followed by the governments of the period to escort the envoys from their camp to the court, they were provided with men and transportation. From the gate of the main court, the envoys were to pay obeisance by bowing their heads several times at different points. While doing so the letters they carried were handed over to the other persons accompanying the envoys. After taking their seats at the appointed place, one of the officers enquired of the well-being of the Ahom monarch, and the purpose of their visit. Thereafter, with the royal permission, the envoys handed the letter over to the officer, who read it. After the scrutiny of the letter, the envoys were asked to deliver the verbal message, if they had any. When all these were over they were allowed to take their seats at the appointed place. After a while, in the case of the Kacharis an officer brought on a tray areca-nut, betel leaves, and flower and put before the court, followed by the entertainment like wrestling, cock-fight, elephant-fight, etc. After these entertainments the envoys were sent back to their camp.

93 KB, p. 45.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
The rulers of foreign countries took exception for any deviation in the observance of customs and practices prevailing in their courts or for any kind of misinformation either written or verbal, conveyed by the Ahom envoys such acts were considered as deliberate violation of diplomatic convention. Whenever such cases occurred, the Ahom envoys were insulted by sending back without giving any kind of due honour. The Kachari king Yasanarayan, contemporary of Siu-seng-phā, insulted two Ahom envoys, Sri Kanta and Sitaliya, who were sent to seek permission to bring the Jayantiya princess through the Kachari kingdom by the Satgaon-Teteliguri route, by refusing the proposal and sending them back without giving proper treatment.97

In 1638, two envoys of the Ahom Government named Lagua Bara Sanatan and tipamiya Saikia Sala were sent to Nawab Mirja Jahina general on a mission of conciliation but in fact to gain time for preparation to the war. When asked by Nawab Mirja Jahina for the purpose of their visit they replied that they came to make an enquiry about his advance to Assam. "If he has come to fight against us please inform us. But we have no intention to fight. We are ready to deliver whatever you ask for". Nawab Mirja Jahina asked for elephants, aloe wood, maric (black pepper) and gold. While carrying the request of the Nawab to the ministers, they said that they would deliver

97 Ibid., p. 25.
the articles after informing the Sivargadeo. "We do not fight for these petty articles." On their next visit to the Nawab, after some time, when all preparations were complete for a fight, they informed him that they had informed the Sivargadeo, but the Sivargadeo was not willing to give anything you asked for. At this reply Jahina turned furious and charged the envoys saying thus, "Knowing well that preparation are being made (by the Ahoms) for a fight with us, you, haramjada, why did you tell me lie (jhubbat) earlier". The two Ahom envoys were thrown into the river Bharali by Mirja Jahina, the Mughal general.\textsuperscript{98} Again in 1655, Khalihai and Komora, the envoys of the Barphukan, were insulted by Yasammattarai, the Jayantiya king and sent them back without giving any kind of provisions as they had not brought with them the Jayantiya traders, who had kept in confinement by the Barphukan.\textsuperscript{99} After all the necessary business was completed, another reception of farewell of the envoys took place at the royal court. The envoys were brought to the court with due formalities to bid them farewell. The names of the envoys, who would accompany the foreign envoys (i.e. the Ahom envoys) and the purpose of their visit were announced. It was the custom on the part of the ruler not to

\textsuperscript{98} AB(SM), p. 61.

\textsuperscript{99} JB, p. 35.
send his letter addressed to the foreign court through the envoys of that foreign court, but through his own envoys. After the ceremony was over the envoys were sent back to their camp. Thereafter, they were sent to the frontier in the same manner as they were brought in. On arrival at the headquarters of the frontier province its governor sent information of the return of the Ahom envoys accompanied by the envoys of his country to the officer of the frontier outpost of the Ahom kingdom. 100

100 KB, p. 41.