A great number of diplomatic letters had been exchanged between the Ahom monarchs, their ministers and governors on one side, and foreign kings, dependent rulers or chiefs on the other. Of such correspondences only about one hundred and fifty are traceable, most of which are, however, not in their complete form. References to many more correspondences are come across in the chronicles of the Ahoms. Of the available letters, about eighty had been received by the Ahom court and the rest were sent to the foreign courts. The distribution of the letters is as follows: five letters were exchanged with the Kacharis, forty-eight with the Jayantiyas, eleven with Tripura, forty with the Mughals, eleven with Koches and the rest with the East India Company. These correspondences bear great importance in the study of the different aspects of the external relations of the Ahom Government with foreign powers, more particularly the forms of address, the types of the relations, the purposes of correspondence, the names of envoys and the articles of presents.

On the basis of language in which the letters were written, they can be placed into three groups. 1. Letters written in Sanskrit. 2. Letters written in the Tai language. 3. Letters
written in mixed languages using words or phrases from Assamese, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Hindi and Bengali. Most letters sent to and received from Tripura were written in Sanskrit whereas the letters received from and despatched to the Mughals contained a number of Persian and Arabic words and phrases. Again the letters sent to and received from the Koches, the Kacharis and the Jayantiyas were replete with Sanskrit words. On the other hand, the letters exchanged between the Ahom court and the Shan States were in the Tai language.

Besides the style of the languages differs from government to government. Thus the letters exchanged with the Kacharis and the Jayantiyas differed in style from those with the Mughals. Thus a letter written by the Kachari Raja to the Barbarua of King Kamaladeva Singha runs thus:

\[ \text{bíṣeṣah jakhan gāṛ śatru madhye haite srīrūdraśīmha} \]
\[ \text{a rājā tāmradhvajak uddhāṛ kariyā śrī śrī visvānāth} \]
\[ \text{kṣetre daksīṇ ārute śrī śivāsīmha mahārajāk baisāyā o} \]
\[ \text{rājā tāmradhvajak bāṁ ārute baisāyā pīṭa-puṭra sambandha} \]
\[ \text{satyadharmma kariyāchil, taddadhi-ubhayadeś-abhedanubat-} \]
\[ \text{cihna prītipurbbak mate gāṅgāsrota calī gecchen.} \]

[Particularly from the time when Svarqadeo Rudra Singha established paternal relationship in all the solemnity by seating Siva Singha on his right thigh, and Tamradhvaj

\[ ^1 \text{PAB, pp.199-201,205-207,211-212,218-222,224-225.} \]
\[ ^2 \text{Tu.B, pp.138-139. Letter from the Kachari Raja to the Barbarua.} \]
on his left, at the holy-site of Visvanath, after having rescued Tamradhvaj from his enemies.

But the letter written to the Mughals bear a different style. A letter written by Nawab Allah Yar Khan to the Barbarua in 1629 runs thus: prāṁ samācār ehi tomār ukil sekmeda o ekadah ai dui jan manuṣya pathāicilā, se āsi pahucil.³ (So the news is thus: Your two envoys Sekmeda and Ekadah whom you sent, reached here safely.)

Special care was taken in sending letters to a foreign court. The letters sent by the Ahom Government to a foreign court were normally written on paper specially prepared. After putting in envelopes, these were sealed and were put in bags made of high quality king-khip or sing-khap cloth.⁴ Secret letters were put in separate containers, and often in spear handles or bamboo tubes. For instance, the letter sent by Siu-dāṅg-pāhā(1397-1407) to the ruler of Mōṅg-kang was put in the handle of a spear,⁵ and the secret letter sent by Rudra Singha to the king of Tripura was put in a bamboo-tube (baṅhar-chungā)⁶.

³PAB, p. 173. Letter from the Barbarua to Allah Yar Khan.
⁴AB(HK), p. 129.
⁵DAB, p. 13.
Letters were carried by officials called *patra-bhari*, or carrier of letter⁷ who were sent with the envoys to the foreign courts. But on the day of reception in the foreign court, the chief envoy carried the letter with its container on his head from his camp to the reception hall.⁸ The foreign rulers sent their letters to the Ahom court in containers such as bags made of fine embroidered cloth, small boxes (temā) made of valuable wood which were polished and painted and sometimes inlaid with costly stones.⁹ The Kacharis and the Jayantiyas usually sent their letters in bags.¹⁰ These bags were properly sealed with the official seals of the despatching authority. Letters were taken out, at the time of reading, by removing the seal of the box or cutting a corner of the bags.¹¹ Such bags were carried by the chief envoy on his head or hanging from his neck from his camp to the reception hall.¹² Thus the Jayantiya envoys brought the letters of their ruler on head of the chief envoy¹³ while those from the Shan States of Burma carried hanging on the neck.¹⁴

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⁸ *IB*, p.6; *JB*, p.68.
⁹ *Tu.B*, p.175.
¹⁰ *JB*, p.68.
¹¹ *Ibid*.
¹² *Tu.B*, p.175.
¹³ *JB*, p.68.
¹⁴ *Tu.B*, p.175.
Almost all letters whether despatched by the Ahom Government or received from the foreign governments opens with the term svasti which means "may it be well with (one)" or "welfare." In some letters svasti is suffixed to the ānji sign which resembles the Assamese numerical figure 7 (♀ = a vertical stroke with its top curved to the left, and in some cases ending in an inward bend with an additional sign called candra-bindu, or ānunāsika above ♂). Svasti is invariably followed by a description of the qualities, more often imaginary than real, of the writer as well as the addressee. It is, however, noticed that in case the sender enjoyed an inferior status in relation to that of the addressee, the description of his qualities followed by that of the sender.

Thus is his letter to the Ahom King Kamalesvar Singha written in the month of Magha, Śaka 1723 (February, 1802), Raja Ramsingh, the tributary Jayantiya ruler extolled the qualities of the former at the beginning followed by those of his own as given below.

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15V.S.Apte, The Students Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Delhi, 1982 (reprint), p.632. "(one)" means the undertaking or the parties concerned.

16It is an "auspicious word used at the beginning of some inscriptions to ensure of the undertaking; an exclamation used at the commencement of inscriptions. Sometimes used as a neuter noun, with astu in the mangala at the end of documents." D.C.Sircar, Indian Epigraphical Glossary, Delhi, 1966, p.331.

17D.C.Sircar, Indian Epigraphy, Delhi, 1965, pp.95-96.

svasti caturmukha-śatamukha-pramukha-varhīmukha-
māuli-mandāra-mānikya-māni-dyutitah-vyatikarabhāskara-nirajitā nijēṣṭādevata caraṇa-saroruhadvandvaniḥsyaṇdānanda-makaranda-bindu-nikarabhramarāyanamā-śrīrīyüktasvargadevamahārāja-
dhirājeṣu-nijēṣṭa-carāṇaika-tāna-māna-mādita-prabhūta bhūti-vaiḥbhavā-ripukula-kumuda-dīvākara-yamāna-subala-kamala-vikāśamāna-dīnaya-dainya-
damana-śrīrīyüktajayantipurapurandarasya prerita-
patrikeyam virajatetaraṃ nāma etat-tubhyam bhavyama-
vāhataṃ samihe.

[May it be well with (you) To the illustrious and illustrious Svarqadeva, the great king above the kings, who behaves like a bee (with reference to) the multitude of drops of the honey of bliss flowing from the couple of lotuses in the form of the feet of his own revered deity (the deity or the feet of the deity) bathed by the lustre (found by) the mixture of the multitude of the lustre of gems and rubies of the coral tree in the heads of the fire-faced (i.e. God) like the hundred-faces (Indra), the four-faced (Brahma) and others. From the illustrious and illustrious lord of Jayantipur, who tames the humility of the poor, who causes to bloom the lotuses in form of persons who are honestly strong, who behaves like the sun with references to the lilies on the form of the host of enemies, who is endowed with mass of wealth and prosperity and who is delighted by the pride of being keenly attentive only to the feet of his own revered deity.]

In the same way, in a letter written by the Barbarua of the Ahom Government addressed to the tributary Kachari ruler Krishnachandra (kṛṣṇacandraṇpeṣu) in Magha, Śaka 1725 (February, 1804), the qualities of the latter were described first followed by those of his own thus -

19Ibid.,p.165.

[May it be well with (you) To the illustrious and illustrious king Krishnachandra, who has made his bee-like heart attracted to the feet of the illustrious Mother Goddess which are like the pollens of a great lotus and which is worshipped by the host of gods like four-faced (Brahma) and others. May it be well with (self) From the great minister named illustrious and illustrious Barbarus coming of the family of Duwara, who is the ocean of all good merits and whose cakora (a kind of bird, the Greek patridge)- like mind has become skillful as a result of enjoying the full-moon like nails of the feet of the illustrious Gopala.

In case the status of the sender was superior to that of the addressee, the reversed was the form. Thus in his letter written by the tributary Jayantiya Raja Lakshmisingh to the Barphukan, the Ahom Governor of Lower Assam, in Phalguna, Śaka 1610 (February, 1688) the qualities of the writer were given first followed by those of the latter thus 20-


20 JB, p.55.
[May it be well with (self) By the great king illustrious and illustrious Landha Sultan Lakshmisingh, Lord of Jayantipur of terrible valour, who is the foremost of the heroes, whose mind has been made to behave constantly like a bee towards the lotus in the form of the feet of the highest deity, whose sun-like valour has been ornamented (because of the fact that) he has chopped off the heads of innumerable enemies by the multitude of arrows placed on the bow held by his own stick-like hand. To the illustrious Barphukan of very nice character, who has defeated sons of Aśvini in beauty, who is greatly generous like the ocean because of the presence of respect, pride and merits of different types.

Similarly in a letter of Phalguna, Saka 1620 (February, 1699) written by the tributary Kachari ruler Tamradhvaj (tāmradhvajanārāyana) to the Namjani Raja (the Ahom Governor of Lower Assam) the qualities of the latter were preceded by those of the former.  

Any deviation from this custom was considered a serious offence. The Kachari rulers, who were subordinate to the Ahom kings when addressed letters to the latter, had to uphold the qualities and fame of the Ahom monarchs first. When this custom was violated, the letters sent by the Kachari rulers, had been rejected in the Ahom royal court. For instance, Kachari Raja Tamradhvajnarayan in his letter of February, 1699 written to his liegelord, Rudra Singha violated this custom by describing his qualities first followed by those of the latter. This letter was considered most improper showing

21 KB, p.62.
disrespect to the Ahom monarch. "The description of the qualities of our king has been given below that of the Kachari king, Tamradhvajnarayan. This is contrary to the well-established convention."\textsuperscript{22} The letter was torn in the royal court and the Kachari envoys, who carried the letter were thrown out of the royal court. They were, however, forgiven on the pleadings of the three ministers.\textsuperscript{23}

In describing the qualities of the sender as well as the addressee the most refined and choicest words and phrases were used to express the appropriate sense or the situation. The physical charms and qualities of head and heart are compared with those of the gods and goddess, the sun and the moon. To give a description of the personal qualities normally words such as "kindness", "generosity", "protector", "fame", "brave", "valorous", "meritorious", "honest", etc. are used.

In a letter sent by the Ahom king, the qualities of the Jayantiya ruler were described as "parama-maṅglodāra-guṇa-guṇārṇava (the ocean of merits because of his highly auspicious and catholic merits)", "kandarpa-darpa-kharvitāṅga (the body, who vanquished the pride of Kandarpa, the God of

\textsuperscript{22} KB, p. 64.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
In a letter written by the Barbarua to the Jayantiya ruler Ramsingh in 1804, the former described his own qualities as "śrīmattviśeṣvara-caraṇa-śrī-puṇa-parāyaṇāntaḥkaraṇa" (the person who has fully devoted his mind to the beautiful feet of the illustrious Visvesvara), "dhiṣanādhi-kr̥tadhiṣanā" (the abode occupied by Brhaspati).

The qualities of the Koch rulers had been described in their letters by the Ahom Government as "kulakamalapraḳāsāika-bhāskara" (the only sun causing to bloom the lotus of his family), "saṃmāṇadānasantānaaśauryyadhairyyaṁbhirāyudāryyapārā-vāra" (the ocean of generosity, gravity, patience, beauty and of the multitude of charity and prestige), "tuhinakaranikara-taraṅginītaraṅgapāṇḍurayaśorāśivirājita" (adorned with the mass of fame brilliant like the ripples of the river in the form of beams of the cold-rayed (moon)), "naraṇātha" (lord of men) "viśvavikhyāta" (famous in the world), "vairivāraṇa-nivāraṇa-paṅcānana" (like the Five-headed (i.e. Śiva) in the act of vanquishing the elephants or impediments posed by the

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24 The letter of the Ahom King Cakradhvaj Singha to Yasamattarai in Baisakha, Śaka 1586 (April, 1665). JB, p.27.


The qualities of the Ahom kings were described as - "samara-sīma-bhīma-parākrama" (terrible valorous in war), "hima hāra hāra hāsa kailāsa dhauta kala dhauta kīrtti maṇḍala" (fame are washed by and white or pure like the mountain Kailasa or like the kasa flower, like th smile of Siva) "kevala tailāṅga vāṅga kāliṅga vividha vānīṃyāna guṇa saṅsaya" (multitude of merit is being sung by the people of the countries like Banga, kalinga).\(^{28}\)

In a letter of Rudra Singha, the qualities of the Tripura king were given as "niravadhi-maṇi-hemādi-vitarāṇa-pūrīta-tāpitaṁitaśānta" (always satisfies the needy people through the gift of jewels, gold, etc.), "nitānta-vidyāvitāsitati-viddhāsthivairivāmalocanā-locāṇānavarata-patitamvū" (has caused tears to roll down incessantly from the eyes of the ladies of the enemies), "gaṇḍagalanmaireyadāra-paṅkila-maṅḍalā-mattamātaṅga-daśana-dārita-samucchadalapatikupāra" (whose intoxicated elephants - who have made the earth muddy by the flow of rut running from their temples -tear the shore of the ocean of their tusk)\(^{29}\). The Barbarua described the qualities of the Tripura king - "yaśastiraskṛta-rādheyādvidānaya-baddhacirasaṅcita-kīrtti" (by his fame has surpassed the fame

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long continued and attached to the generous like Radheya (Karpa) and others. In his letter, Tripura king praised the Ahom king as "nījāsvajinī-nāyakagāna-samaravijayāsamudyama-samīha-gopuraniḥsara-vṛttantākalanabhaya-vikalitojjitālayavipratīpa-bhūpala-kula-vamalocanānāyanāvalīvigalitāsrudhāra-samutpādita-pārāvāra" (who has created an ocean of tears rolling down the eyes of the fair-eyed (i.e. ladies) of the multitude of opponent kings who have left their abods out of fear created by the news of the movement through the city gate by his (the king's) own warriors desiring to make attempts for a victory in war), and "vidhibodhitakanānakari-turaṅga-mādyanekavidhavitarana-kṛtarthī" (who is satisfied by giving away various gifts like gold, elephants, horse, through proper families).

The qualities of the Mughal governors were described thus - "gīyamana yaśa santāna" (multitude of glories is being sung), "prabalaripakṣa gahana dahanaika dāvānala" (like the only fire consuming the deep forest in the form of the strong enemies). The Barbarua described Allah Yar Khan as "sukula-kamala-vistārita" (the lotus of his blessed family), "aṃśeṣa-

30 Letter of the Barbarua to Ratnamaniya of Kartika, Śaka 1633 (October, 1711). TB, p.17.


vidyavidavinoda-visārada" (learned because of the pleasure of associating with innumerable learned persons). The Governor-General of the East India Company at Calcutta was described as "pracanda dordamda dhrtakodanda" (who holds a bow with his tremendous stick-like arms), "srīmannikhila guṇagrāma viṣramadhamā" (the resting place of the multitude of all merits), and "sakala sannīti samasreyāṇa" (the resort of all the noble principles).

The description of the qualities was followed by a very brief statement of the well-being and health of the writer as well as that of the addressee, which in most cases runs thus, "ethā kuśal, tomār kuśal sadā cāhi" (here is well, always wish your well-being), or "ethāt āmār samastare kuśal, tomār kuśal sarvadā cāhi" (here we are all well, always wish your well-being), or their variant forms as "ethā kuśal, tomār kuśal sarbbate cāhi" or "atra kuśal, tomār kuśal sadā bhāl cāhi".

34 The joint letter of the Ahom ministers to the Governor-General of Baisakha, Saka 1716 (May, 1794). Pracin Bangla Patra Sankalan, p.54.
35 JB, pp.31,34,56.
36 PAB, p.173.
37 Ibid., p.205.
This was followed by main purpose of the letter for which it was despatched. According to purpose, the diplomatic letters may be grouped under several heads such as the establishment and continuation of relations, the renewal of relations, the negotiations and settlement of disputes, request for assistance, surrender or extradition of persons taking shelter in a foreign country, the payment of tributes, the establishment of trade and commerce, etc.

Letters seeking friendly relations with foreign states or rulers were very carefully couched in subtle terms so that such requests were not to convey the weakness or inferior position of the despatcher. It was because of the fact that the despatch of diplomatic mission with letter by a ruler for the first time to another was normally considered a sort of tacit admission of subordinate position of the former to the latter. Hence normally a government did not initiate friendly relations with foreign governments by sending its own envoys and letters.

During the reign of Siu-seng-phā when the Mughal army advanced as far as the Bharali river, the former sent, in consultation with his ministers, five persons in the name of his ministers and governors to the Kachari kingdom to initiate friendly relations with the Kachari ruler which had
been broken off sometime earlier. With a view to establishing friendly relations with the Tripura king Ratnamanikya, Rudra Singha sent in the name of his Barbarua two persons namely Ratna Kandali and Arjun Das in the company of a scholar from Bengal who was returning from Assam, on the pretext of fetching water of the Ganges. During his stay in the Tripura capital Anandiram could create an interest of the Tripura king about Assam and convinced the latter of the desirability of cultivating friendship with the Ahom monarch. Ratnamanikya then invited Ratna Kandali and Arjun Das, who were staying with Anandiram to his court and made enquiry about the real purpose of their visit, and also expressed his willingness to send some persons to the Ahom court in order to initiate friendship. They advised the Tripura king to send envoys not to the Ahom king directly but to the Barbarua, "who would convey your message to his Majesty". Accordingly, the Tripura king sent his envoys in company with them. In his letter, Ratnamanikya wrote, "some presentation is hereby sent to you, I shall be very glad if it is kindly accepted by you". The letter ends with the expectation that the two kingdoms would be united and friendship would be established. Thus started the friendly relations,
and it was the Tripura king, who first took the initiative.

Relations were renewed on the accession of a new ruler or after a lapse or break of the relations. In the first case, the friendship or good relations existing between the two rulers was recalled and the eagerness to continue the same was expressed. On the death of the Ahom king, Cakradhvaj Singha and the accession of Udayaditya Singha to the Ahom throne in 1669, the Raja of Jayantiya with a view to continuing friendship wrote to the new Ahom monarch thus "Garhgaon and Jayanti were not two but have been united as one family for a long time. Particularly friendship would grow day by day and it would not decrease. We have learnt from the envoys your desire to renew the friendship. We too have great desire for the same. It is proper to establish friendship with a right person. Therefore you are requested to send envoy as before to maintain the political friendship without any hesitation, and he (the Jayantiya king) would do on his part according to the prevailing custom."41

In the same way, it was also a part of the Ahom diplomatic relations that when a new king sat on the throne, subordinate kings and chiefs had to send envoys to reaffirm their allegiance to him. Thus on the accession of Jaydhvaj Singha to the Ahom

41JB,p.41. Letter from Jayantiya Raja Lakshmisingh to Ahom king Udayaditya Singha.
throne the subordinate rulers of Kachari and Jayantiya and other chiefs sent letters and presents through their envoy. 42

In case of break of the relations between the Ahom Government and a subordinate ruler it was always the subordinate power, who was to initiate the renewal. Several such renewals are come across in the relations between the Ahoms and the Kacharis. One such instance was the renewal of friendship by the Kachari Raja, Birdarpanarayan, with the Ahom monarch Jaydhvaj Singha after a break of his relations with the Ahoms. The Kachari Raja sent his two envoys, Camatakata and Satgaonya Patar to the Barphukan requesting him to "take such steps which are likely to create friendship between the two kings". 43

On instruction from the king, the Barphukan after receiving the Kachari envoys sent them back to their country with an officer named Nidhi Saikia saying "They should come with letter after observing all formalities". 44 Accordingly, Birdarpanarayan again sent his envoys to the Ahom royal court with letters in proper order. With the arrival of the envoys with letters and presents from the Kachari Raja, the subordinate relations

42 AB(SKD), pp.2-4.
43 KB, pp.39-40.
44 Ibid., p.40.
were renewed. Another instance of renewal of relations after a break was made by Tamradhvajnarayan during the reign of Rudra Singha.\(^4\) The Dalai sent as envoy by the former was received by the Kaliyabariya Barphukan. The envoy conveyed the pleadings of his king for restoration of the relations thus, "even if crows become white, herons become black, stones float, the friendship between us will not break. Like gold and silver our friendship has become dirty, it should brighten. If (the Ahom Government) are interested, the Kaliyabariya Barphukan will send a person (in company) with us." The Phukan replied thus "As you have been sent to us by Hejambasvar in remembrance of old ties and is requesting a person to be sent from our country for renewing the ties, it is surely good. His wish will be fulfilled, I will send a chaukiyal with you. He (the Kachari Raja) should send good man (bhal mānum) then only the ties will be renewed". Soon after another person was sent to the Ahom Governor at Kaliyabar to enquire about the modalities as how to address the letter by the Kachari ruler. The governor instructed him of the form of the address and other procedures. Accordingly, the Kachari Raja sent two good persons as envoys, namely Gandharvarai and Elabar, with letters and presents. Thus the ties between the two kingdoms were renewed.

\(^4\)KB,p.58.
Disputes with neighbouring rulers relating to some territories in the border of the Ahom kingdom often led to long diplomatic correspondences. In some cases, the diplomatic exercises ended in complete estrangement of the relations between the two governments. One such case was relating to the territory of Dimarua, a petty state under a chief situated at the foothill of the southern border of the Ahom kingdom contiguous to the Jayantiya kingdom. Lying as it was between the two kingdoms its rulers changed their loyalty according to the pendulum of political strength between them. Whenever, the Ahom rulers proved their might, the chief of Dimarua submitted to them. In the seventeenth century the ruler of Dimarua, due to the atrocities committed by the Kachari Raja Meghanarayan, submitted to the Koch king Naranarayan and became his tributary. Since then rulers supplied tributes and remained tributary to the Koches. Taking the opportunity of the capture of the Koch ruler Parikshitnarayan, the liegelord of Dimarua, by the Mughals, the Jayantiya ruler, Dhanmanik seized Prabhakar, the chief of Dimarua. Later on, he was released, and his son, Mangal, submitted to the Ahom monarch Siu-seng-phā and became the latter's tributary. On the occupation of lower Assam by the Mughals, Dimarua along with

other bordering states came under their protection. But after the restoration of their territory by driving out the Mughals, the Ahoms made Dimarua their subordinate state. At this stage sometime in 1668, the Jayantiya Raja, Pratapsingh, claimed the overlordship of Dimarua thus, "sarba kāle dimaruā āmār, prītit thāki āmālai chārī divonahe ucit" (Dimarua has always been ours, by keeping friendship it should be ceded to us)47. This claim of the Jayantiya Raja over Dimarua started a long series of diplomatic correspondences covering a period of ten years and had been the subject matter of almost all letters as well as verbal messages exchanged between the Ahom Government and the Jayantiya ruler. The Jayantiya envoy, Ramai, on his mission to the Ahom capital in 1672, raised the claim of Dimarua thus "Dimarua is always our. It should be returned to us". On this claim, the Buragohain replied, "You should not speak this. Previously, too, Dimarua was under our Svargadeo. It was acquired after defeating the Bangals (the Mughals). If it was belonged to him why did not he protect Dimarua (from the Mughals)? This proves Dimarua does not belong to him. Now also Dimarua was rescued by vanquishing the Bangals (the Mughals). You should not raise any such matter which creates controversy".48

47 JB, pp.40,44.
48 Ibid., pp.42,46.
Not getting a reply to his claim of Dimarua, Lakshmisingh of Jayantiya again raised the matter before the Ahom envoys visiting his capital. He also put the demand in his letter thus, "Dimarua had always been my tributary. Your occupation is very improper. Therefore, you surrender Dimarua so that the friendly relations between two kingdoms will grow day by day". He also told the Ahom envoys "If Dimarua is surrendered (to me) you two envoys come along with my envoys. If not, you do not come and send back my envoys. Afterwards I will take necessary action". 49

The Ahom Government strongly refuted the claim saying, "Dimarua always belongs to us. Svargadeo has protected it by vanquishing Syed Feroz and other Nawabs. Therefore this claim is unjust. Even then it was claimed (by Jayantiya) which is but a violation of friendship." This time no Ahom envoy accompanied the Jayantiya envoys to their capital. The relations between the Jayantiya and Ahom Governments, thus, reached a breaking point.

Realizing the serious consequence, the Jayantiya envoys pleaded, on his own, before the Ahom court to send Ahom envoys with letters and presents, and to remain at the frontier.

He also pleaded not to close the frontier outposts and markets

49Ibid.,pp.47-48.
for a few more months. The Buragohain agreed to send letters and presents from the ministers, but not from the king, through the Jayantiya envoy. This happened in Saka 1598 (1676). Even after this, the Jayantiya Raja continued to send envoys with letters asking for the return of Dimarua. Ultimately the Buragohain told the Jayantiya thus, "(Your king) asked for Dimarua. We have given our decision not once or twice but several times. It is due to ignorance that the matter once decided is reopened. Such claim is improper, he knows it well". With this the controversy over Dimarua came to an end.

Very often before and during war, negotiations for peace or conclusion of treaty involved exchange of diplomatic missions and letters. On the occupation of the Ahom capital by the Mughal army under Nawab Mir Jumla, Jaydhvaj Singha, who took shelter in the hills, directed his ministers to initiate negotiations with the enemy. Accordingly, the Buragohain, in consultation with other officers, deputed four envoys namely Sultan, Chaturbhuj, Chandrai, Kamal to persuade Nawab Mir Jumla with the message "We are prepared to pay tribute". Dilal Khan, after having consultation with Mir Jumla, sent envoys,  

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50 Ibid., p.53.
51 PAB, p.127; Ka.B, p.64.
Gadai, Barkath and Barhimal in company with the four Ahom envoys to the Ahom minister with the following message "this kingdom has become the subject of Patshah. If they voluntarily give us information about the amount of revenue collected from this kingdom only then we shall go back." On receiving this message the minister sent envoys to inform the Mughal General that they were prepared to pay 90 elephants and rupees three lakhs. Having received this message Mir Jumla though at first not agreeable, ultimately agreed after long persuasion of Dilal Khan. Mir Jumla agreed to go back on the following condition, "All right, let them deliver 90 elephants and rupees three lakhs, and also a daughter of the king to the son of the Patshah. Then only all these will be materialized". This message was conveyed in a letter to the Ahom minister by the Mughal envoys Gadai and Barhimul. The prime minister conveyed this to his king, who agreed to this condition with reluctance. The acceptance was conveyed in writing to the Mughal General through the Ahom envoys. As a result, a treaty was concluded between the Ahoms and the Mughals.

The cases of extradition of Ahom subjects, who got shelter in foreign territory and foreigners took refuge in the Ahom

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52 Ibid.; ibid.
53 AB(SM), pp. 81-84; Ka.B, pp. 64-68; PAB, pp. 126-128.
kingdom involved diplomatic correspondences between the Ahom Government and the foreign states. During the reign of Siu-seng-pha one Harikesh Chaudhuri, a Mughal revenue collector, crossed over the frontier and took shelter in Darrang, a tributary state of the Ahom kings. Learning this Abdul Islam Khan the Nawab of Dacca, sent envoys with letter requesting the Ahom king to arrest and to send him back to Dacca. King Siu-seng-pha, however, refused to do so on the plea that it was against the principle to surrender a refugee.\textsuperscript{54}

During the reign of the same monarch, Chandranarayan, a son of Parikshitnarayan, the ruler of Koch Hajo who submitted to the Mughals, fled away from there and placed himself under the protection of the Ahom king. On learning this, Nawab Allah Yar Khan, the Mughal General sent Lenga and Polonga, with letter to the Barbarua for his extradition. In his letter to the Nawab, sent through envoys Sanatan and Kanu, the Barbarua reiterated the friendship with the Mughals, but did not agree to surrender Chandranarayan on the ground that earlier the Mughal Nawabs, too, declined to surrender some Ahom subjects taking shelter in their territory. He stated that a man of high position should not surrender a person who took shelter under him. Under the circumstances the non-surrender of

\textsuperscript{54}PAB,p.98.
Chandranarayan should not disturb the friendly relations existing between the two powers.\textsuperscript{55}

The case of Barchetiya, an officer of the Ahom Government, who was placed at Marangi in the Dhansiri valley to deal with the Kacharías,\textsuperscript{56} escaped in 1662 to the Kachari kingdom.\textsuperscript{57} Soon after his accession to the throne, Cakradhvaj Singha deputed Ram and Laluk to the Kachari Raja with a written request to inform about Barchetiya supposed to have taken shelter in the Kachari kingdom.\textsuperscript{58} The communication read that during the days of Mughal invasion many people including some high officials had left their country. "Now all others have come back and made their submission to me. Barchetiya has not yet come. We have no information whether he died or was captured by the Mughals or was staying with our friend (you). If he is staying with you as if he were staying at my place, and surely he would be sent back."\textsuperscript{59} The Kachari Raja declined to submit Barchetiya and sent back the Ahom envoys without sending his own envoys,\textsuperscript{60} indicating thereby his refusal to surrender Barchetiya.

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid., pp. 175-178. Allah Yar Khan's letter to the Barbarua.
\textsuperscript{56}KB, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{57}PAB, p. 127.
\textsuperscript{58}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59}KB, pp. 50-52.
\textsuperscript{60}Ibid.
The enquiry about the fate of 23 Mughal subjects missing (apparently killed by the Ahom border guards) in the Ahom frontier had been a subject matter of diplomatic correspondence between the Ahom and the Mughal Governments for four years.⁶¹ In one of his letters sent to the Barbarua, Mughal Nawab Allah Yar Khan wrote, "How could this act (of not giving details about the missing persons) on your part would lead to the promotion of friendship?"⁶²

Sometimes, the problem of refugees turned out as subject matter of long and serious correspondences between the Ahom Government and foreign states. During the reign of Gaurinath Singha a number of Ahom subjects including some Moamariyas and one or two Ahom princes entered the Kachari kingdom and took refuge there. Soon they caused troubles in the frontier. The Barbarua, on the directive of King Kamalesvar Singha sent, in 1795 letter and presents to the Kachari King Krishnachandra to surrender the refugees giving a veiled threat. He wrote, "In the period of disturbance of our country caused by enemies many subjects of our country like Barmura (Bijay Barmura Gohain), Moamariya and other refugees fled away and took shelter in your country. Now by the grace of God, (the Svarqadeo) recovered

⁶¹PAB, pp. 82-85, 181-187.
his country after suppressing the enemies. By following the prevailing rules and customs, the people, who had fled away and took shelter in your country should be surrendered without delay and send with our envoys Phedela Kataki and Lakhiram Bora. Then only the father (the Ahom king)-son (the Kachari Raja) relation (i.e. paternal relation) would be maintained. In case you do not surrender Barmura (Bijay Barmura Gohain), Moamariya and other refugees you will see its consequence."\(^{63}\)

The Kachari king in his reply to the Barbarua did not make any pointed reference to this problem and gave only indirect explanation that it was some of his erring subjects of Dharma-pur who committed such mischief. The Barbarua expressed to the Kachari envoys, "On your return you inform your king that if he was truly adhering to the existing rules and customs, he should find out our refugees and sent them back without delay."\(^{64}\) In his reply of 1803, to the Barbarua's letter, the Kachari Raja did not give direct reply to the Ahom demand. The Barbarua, therefore, in his reply of 1805 reiterated the demand for the surrender of the refugee subjects mentioned earlier. He wrote "You being forgetful of earlier promises and by discarding father-son relations and by violating the

\(^{63}\) Tu.B, p.165-167.

\(^{64}\) Ibid.
prevailing rules and customs, you have collected slave-son Burmura, Moamariya, other refugees and the Kacharis, and caused them to fight against us and created many undesirable actions, which are not befitting to be recorded in letter. Even then by remaining firm in prevailing custom and maintaining the father-son relations we have not decided to take action on such matter. If you really intend to maintain the old ties, and rules and customs you take such action so that Barmura, Moamariya and other refugees with their sons and wives should return immediately. If you do not pay any heed to this advice you shall know what is done by Svargadeo. This demand of the Ahom Government, too, was ignored by the Kachari Raja. This led to the Ahom invasion of the Kachari kingdom, and after defeating the Kacharis seized some of the refugees and brought them back.

The claim of tribute by the Ahom Government formed subject matter of diplomatic correspondences between the Ahom Government and foreign states. The chiefs of the states of Möng Iton, Möng Ti-pam and Möng Kham-jang neglected to pay tributes to the Ahom king for eight years. Siu-dâng-phâ sent an envoy named Tâ-pang-mâo with letters to the ruler of Möng-kang making an enquiry whether they had been paying tribute to the latter.

65Tu.B, p.166.
66SAB, pp.182-183.
"Kham-jang, Iton and Ti-pam, these three states are mine. They have not paid tribute to me. I will re-affirm my overlordship over these three states". The ruler of Mong-kang became angry and sent his messengers to these states asking their rulers to pay tribute to the Ahom king. "Why they have not paid tributes to my brother? Why did they want to remain as independent?" He further sent his envoy with letter and valuable presents to the Ahom king informing the latter about the step he had taken in this regard. The payment of tribute was a subject of correspondence between the Mughal Emperor and the Ahom Government during the reign of Cakradhvaj Singha.

Matters relating to trade and commerce had also been subjects of diplomatic correspondences with foreign states. The outstanding dues owed by some traders of the Ahom kingdom to Daniel Raush, an English merchant doing salt trade at Goalpara, became a subject of frequent and prolonged diplomatic correspondence between the East India Company's Government of Bengal and the Ahom Government. After the murder of Raush by the Dumdumiyas near Darrang, his wife submitted a claim of about three lakhs of rupees which included (1) the expenses incurred by him in paying the troops which he had procured

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67 SAB, pp.53-54; DAB, p.13.
68 PAB, pp.130-132; AB(SM), pp.87-89.
from Dacca for the Ahom king, (2) The value his property plundered by the Dumdumiyas at the time of his murder, (4) the balances due from the Assamese merchants. On the insistence of Raush's heir and executors, the Government of the East India Company made correspondences with Assam Government with a view to settling the problem. After Raush's death, Kamalocan Nandi came to Assam for the delivery of arms to the Ahom king requested for the payment of the balance. In a letter addressed to James Wordsworth the Judge of Rangpur, the Ahom king acknowledged the receipt of a letter from the Governor-General to the effect that Mr. MacCullum, the Raush's executor had deputed Kamalocan Nandi with necessary documents and paper to Assam for realizing outstanding dues of late Raush. Kamalocan Nandi, however, could not produce the original documents. In his letter addressed to the Governor-General, the Ahom king stated on the subject that if there was any balance due to Raush on account of troops and provisions, it would be discharged. It is also stated that according to account supplied by his officers there was a balance of Rs.6,000 due to Raush. But according to a copy of account

69 AAR, p.440. George Barlow to Kamalesvar Singha, September 27, 1805.

submitted by MacCullum in 1796 the balance was shown as Rs.18,000 but Kamallocan Nandi had produced a balance of Rs.20,000 which the king stated could not be admitted. The king, therefore, requested to examine the accound and to give a decision. In his reply of 26 February, 1813, the Governor-General claimed Rs.50,000 as Raush's outstanding dues. King Chandrakanta Singha explained the position that in the absence of the full documents the matter could not be settled. Moreover, the most of the persons against whom debt was claimed were already dead. Those who were still living were so poor and destitute that they were not able to pay even Rs.25. This letter indicated that Raush's outstanding dues could not be realized. The matter remained unsettled and more correspondence were found to have been made during the period of Burmese invasion.

The names of the envoys, who carried a letter to the foreign government, were invariably recorded in the letter itself. Normally their names immediately followed the statement of purpose. Only in the letter of Ratnamanikya, the Tripura


72 Letter of the Governor-General to Chandrakanta Singha.

king, written to the Barbarua in Saka 1632 (1710), instead of giving the names, it mentioned "sahyābāptavāpi dvau" (two enlightened persons). In all other cases, if a letter did not contain the name of envoy or envoys, it was considered of doubtful authenticity and such letters were sent back. Thus the Barphukan declined to accept a letter written by Shayesta Khan, the Mughal Governor of Bengal in Saka 1582 (1660) because it did not mention the envoys, who carried it. In his refusal to accept the said letter from the vakil (messenger), the Barphukan recalled the principle thus, "vakil hale patrat lekhiba lāge" (in case of vakils, there names need be recorded in the letter). From the diplomatic letters, it is, thus, possible to collect a long list of envoys of the Ahom Government as well as those of the foreign states.

It was a universally accepted custom in foreign relations to send presents of articles with letters. Such presents, called patra-sandes or patra-cihna, variantly patracinna, were listed either towards the end of the same letter or on a separate piece of paper. In the letter sent by King Rudra Singha

74 TB, p. 8.
75 PAB, p. 228.
76 A list of envoys is given in Appendix II.
77 In most letters, this term was used.
78 These terms were used in a few letters. Tu.B, p. 137; Ka.B, p. 82; Pracin Bangla Patra Sankalan, L.Nos. 43, 83, pp. 57, 59.
to Tripura king Ratnamanikya the articles of presents were listed in a separate paper. 79 On a few occasions, the Ahom king sent his presents with letter written by his officials without sending his own letter. Thus Gaurinath Singha sent presents to the Governor-General along with a letter of 8 June, 1794, sent by the Barphukan at Gauhati. 80 There are a few instances when the Ahom king sent presents to foreign rulers through the visiting foreign envoys. In Śaka, 1590 (1668) King Udayaditya Singha sent presents to the Jayantiya Raja Lakshmisingh through the Jayantiya envoys, who visited the Ahom royal court. 81 In 1802, without providing Ahom envoy, the Ahom monarch Kamalesvar Singha sent the following articles to the Deva-Dharma Raja of Bhutan: One lime-pot made of five tolas of gold with jewels inset; one receptacle for tobacco made of four tolas of gold; one top made of three tolas of gold used in japi along with a sunshade; one Ahom-jara or casket made of one hundred and six and a half tolas of gold; one silver betel-pot weighing seventy-two and a quarter tolas; one silver khadaban weighing thirty-four tolas; one silver cup pinned on a conical support weighing twenty-seven tolas; 

79 TiB, p.15.
80 Pracin Bangla Patra Sankalan, L.No.43, p.57.
81 JB, p.41.
one copper sarai inlaid with silver; one plain brass dish with support; one knife set with gems, fifteen knives with ivory handles inlaid with brass; fifteen knives with handles of buffalo-horn inlaid with silver; two fans made of peacock feathers; one ivory box; four bags of poppy seeds and four wreaths of ivory, one turban made of very fine texture; one cheleng with embroidery in four margins; one satin cloak made of laljang stuff of the colour of the leaves of sugarcane; one cotton girdle with embroidered lines; one dhuti of fine silk; one japi with gold top and flowered at places. In another set were given one cotton kerchief, one embroidered patding; one pair of double-folded cloth with embroideries running through the length and breadth; one piece of basowal or loincloth; one piece of embroidered tangali or girdle; one silk dhuti; one satin frock-coat of the colour of sugarcane leaves; one flower cotton napkin. The following articles were presented on behalf of the Buragohain - one turban sixteen cubits long made of bara-ania or very fine yarn; one large double sheet embroidered on the corners and lengthwise, lined with stripes woven at regular intervals; one basowal; one embroidered tangali; one spotted napkin; one silk dhuti, one satin frock-coat with sewn flower-work at intervals; three knives with ivory handles and the blunt portion inlaid with brass; four knives with plain horn handles, one japi made of palm leaves with a silver top and embroidered trimmings; two ivory pots of poppy seeds;
and ivory box.  

The number, nature and quality of the articles of presents had always been in proportion to articles sent by the foreign governments. Further the number and qualities of the articles primarily depended on the status and position of the sender as well as that of the addressee. In case of presents sent to the king and the ministers at the same time, the quality and quantity of articles meant for the ministers were a little inferior to those sent to the king. For instance, in 1677, the presents sent by Lakshmisingh, the Jayantiya ruler to his overlord, Siu-dai-phā included seven articles such as a- 
shawl (1 piece), kāsā (1 no.) gādā (1 no.), adātā (1 piece), 
teisgaji (11 pieces), māyali (5 pieces), iron (implements 5 nos.). Whereas those sent to his ministers the Buragohain included only three articles kāsā (1 piece), teisgaji (1 piece), iron (implements 4 nos.).

In the same way the articles sent as presents by the Ahom Government to a foreign ruler were superior in quality and quantity to those of his ministers. Thus, the presents sent by Ahom king Udayaditya Singha along with his letter to Jayantiya Raja, Lakshmisingh consisted of nine varieties

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83 KB, p.48.
84 In the letters of Lakshmisingha to Siu-dāi-phā and Rukma Buragohain. JB, pp.49, 51.
of articles such as katipā (2 pieces), kirmiži (2 pieces), dharā (2 nos.), bāniyā (2 nos.) gāndh (4 nos.), knives (20 nos.), gānthiyan (2 bags), pepper (4 packets), and chowris both white and black (4 nos.). But those sent to his minister included only four varieties such as dharā (2 nos.), pepper (4 packets), gānthiyan (1 bag), and knives (4 nos.).

In 1802, Kamalesvar Singha sent nine varieties of articles to the Governor-General, the Earl of Mornington, consisting of 1 large Assam ewer inlaid with gold and silver, 1 ivory mat, 3 fan (pankha), 2 ivory back-scratchers, 4 large elephant tusks, 16 pieces of different varieties of silk cloth, 4 white chowris, 10 seer of aloe wood, 4 Dau-dai birds, while those from his Bargoılan included only five varieties such as 1 ivory fan (pankha), 2 back-scratchers, 2 pairs of large tusks, 6 pieces of silk cloth, 2 Dau-dai birds as present to him.

Articles of presents sent foreign states and received from them may be grouped into four categories: animals and birds such as elephants, horses, methons, cows, and Dau-dai (Darik) birds, which are rare elsewhere; weapons such as crossbows, spears, swords, knives, pistols, muskets, etc.; natural and animal products such as sandal wood, aloe wood, pepper,

85 Ibid., p. 43.
86 Pracin Bangla Patra Sankalan, L.Nos.81,82,pp.91-92,94.
lac, ganthiyan or garthiyan, animal horn, elephant tusk, chowris, bamboo mats, rattan boxes, sugar, salt, metals and metallic objects, chemicals, gold-dust; and varieties of cloth and ornaments of gold and silver. Usually certain articles were sent to foreign country where these were not readily available or even rare and were in great demand.

The articles sent to the Kachari rulers included cloth of certain varieties, knives mainly small knives with handle (which could be folded), pepper. Among the articles sent to the Koch rulers included cloth mats, coins, ivory, small boxes inlaid with beads. Articles sent to the Jayantiya Rajas consisted of knives with folding handles, pepper, mat, cloth, ganthiyan, kasturi (gandh). Articles sent to Tripura included different varieties of cloth, chowris, gold ornaments, back-scratchers. Articles sent to the Shan States of Burma included silver tāo-kin, kalah, belā, tāo cloth, basowāl. Articles sent to the East India Company's Government included different varieties of cloth, ivory, mats, birds, elephants,
In the same way, the foreign governments sent articles along with letters. The Manipur rulers sent elephants, horses, gold and silver; the Shan States of Upper Burma sent elephants, horses, cloth, gold and silver ornaments, sitting tools, cross-bow; the Kachari rulers sent elephants, horses, jaiphal, sandal wood, knives, bamboo mats, cloth. Thus in 1698, Tamradhvajnarayan, the Kachari Raja, sent to the Barbarua sandal wood 1 bag, jaiphal 1 bag, bamboo mat 1. The Jayantiya rulers sent varieties of cloth, iron (implements), ganthiyan, mats. In 1663, Yasamattarai sent to the Ahom king, Cakradhvaj Singh, - shawl 1 piece, khasa 3 nos., iron (implements) 60 pieces. The Koch rulers sent horses, cloth utensils, chowrias, pearl. The East India Company sent articles as presents, which included varieties of cloth, weapons like pistols, spices, looking glasses, toys, sandal wood, pictures of Europe in handsome frame.

92 Pracin Bangla Patra Sankalan, pp. 91-92, 94. The list of articles is given in Appendix I\
94 Ibid., p. 13; ibid., p. 51; Tu.B, pp. 142, 175-176.
95 KB, p. 62.
96 JB, p. 30.
97 AAR, p. 164. The list of articles is given in Appendix IV.
All letters whether sent by the Ahom Government or by
the foreign states are dated. The dates are always found towards
the end. In almost all the letters exchanged between the Ahom
Government and the Mughal Emperors and the Nawabs of Bengal,
the dates immediately follow the statement of purpose but
before the list of articles sent as presents, while in case
of other letters which form the majority, the dates are placed
at the end.

The year mentioned in a letter is according to an era
prevalent in the traditional system of the sender or in the
region or the country and the period in question. In all
correspondences made between the Ahom Government and the Shan
rulers of Burma, the lāk-ni or the traditional era, followed
by the Tai people all over China, Vietnam and the South-East
Asia, was used.98 This era had originally six months of 29
days and six months of 30 days making a total of 354 days in
a year.99 In most of the correspondences exchanged between
the Ahom Government and other foreign states, Śaka era was
used.100 In a few letters, however, Bānglā Sāl, or the Bengali
era 101 was used. Thus in the two letters, one by Rani

98 A-B, p.51.
101 D.C.Sircar, Indian Epigraphy, pp.312-313.
Kamalesvari, the widowed queen of Gaurinath Singha and the other by Brajanath Konwar, an Ahom prince, staying in Bengal, sent to the Governor-General of Bengal, the *Bangla Sāl* was used. In a few other letters sent by the Barphukan to the East India Company's Government in Bengal, this era was used. It appears that these letters were apparently drafted by some Bengali writers, because normally letters sent by the Ahom Government were not dated in Bengali era. In the correspondence of the Bengal Government of the East India Company, both *Bangla Sāl*, or *San* and Christian era were used at the same letter.

In some letters of later period not only the year, but also the month, fortnight and day are often mentioned. In general, the year comes first followed by the month and the date and day. In their letters, the Mughal Nawabs put the months in their Arabic names. In the letter sent to the Tripura kings, the dates expressed in words are quoted again in figures, and the fortnight in terms of the moon's phase. Thus the letter of Rudra Singha to Ratnamaniyka, the date is recorded thus: This letter is being sent on the fifth day of white fortnight in the month of Kārtika of Śaka 1633.

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102 Pracin Bangla Patra Sankalan, L. Nos. 101 and 103, pp. 122, 126.
103 Ibid., L. No. 83, p. 95, L. No. 87, p. 100.
104 Tu. B, pp. 158, 167; PAB, pp. 201, 207.
105 PAB, pp. 168, 171.