CHAPTER II

THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT OF THE AHOMS

The traditional political organization of the Tai people was the möng, also spelt mung, muong, mån, muang, meng or even mang by different writers. The size of a möng was not big; the extent of its boundary did not go to any great distance beyond its administrative centre. H.G. Quaritch Wales, who conducted research on the ancient form of government of the Siamese (the present day Thai) observes that the extent of a möng was usually two days' journey or about thirty miles across.

Möng being small, its constituent units were no other than báns (villages). A bán normally contained between 30

2 Throughout the work, we have followed the spelling möng.
5 The Chinese Shans called their administrative unit as kàng. Frank M. Lebar et al., op. cit., p. 192.
to 80 ruens (households or hearth) but occasionally a large ban contained up to 200 households. The ruens, or the households were the lowest units of the möngs. Each möng was self-sufficient or tried to attain self-sufficiency. Life was simple and demand was less complex. It was believed that a möng had its own guardian spirit called phi-möng. In the same way each village had its own guardian spirit called phi-bän. Both phi-möng and phi-bän had to be worshipped every year by the community-priests called maw-möng and maw-bän respectively. Consequently möng was not merely a political organisation, but also served as socio-economic unit centering which the life, culture, religion, and economy of the Tai people revolved. Considering these aspects of a Tai möng, it is called a möng-state.

It has been explained that the peculiar character of the Tai möng had been the influence of geography and environment. The Tai möng had its birth and growth in the small river valleys in southern China, northern Vietnam, northern extremity of Burma. This region being hilly, its river valleys, its rainfall...

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6 Ibid., pp. 192, 195, 223, 225, 227. The bän of the Tho group consisted of as low as 6 or 7 households.

in which the Tai lived, were small; and this had caused the size of mông to remain confined to one single river valley. The specimens of ancient Tai mông existed till recently in parts of Burma, northern Vietnam and southern China.

A mông was ruled by a chăo meaning "lord" and was thus called chăo-mông or "the lord of the mông". Although the character of the original chăoship is not known, during the historical period it had acquired an hereditary character, and the chăo-mông always belonged to the ruling families. He was the leader and protector of his people both in time of war and peace. He made the law and was the chief judicial officer.

In the matter of administration the chăo-mông was assisted by a council of elders comprising the headmen of the villages.


9 Sometimes he was called khun. The exact difference between the two terms is difficult to determine. Both terms have been in use since very early times. For instance, the two grandsons of Lengdon, a legendary figure, were named Khun-lung and Khun-lâi. In the Sukhodaya inscription A.D. 1282 king Ram-kham-haeng is designated as khun. Later on the term chăo was applied also to a prince.

known as po-bān meaning the "father of the village". In the same way, po-bāns were assisted, in village administration, by the po-ruens, who were the natural heads of the households.

Just as the chāo-mōng was the head of the mōng, po-bān was the head of the village and po-ruen the head of the household.

The po-bān guided the po-ruen and decided, in consultation with the po-ruen, cases of dispute or matters brought before him relating to the village. It was the po-bān through whom the chāo-mōng received his share of revenue from the po-ruen. In the same way, it was through po-bān the chāo-mōng collected the services of men for different departments of the mōng.

The po-bān, too, often acted as a group leader in the time of war or emergency. Since the po-ruen had no direct relation with the chāo-mōng, the po-bān served as the medium between the chāo-mōng and the po-ruen.

The chāo was the owner of all land and men of his mōng. He distributed such land as was required by the po-bān, who again distributed their lots to the po-ruens. Land was, thus,

11 Po means "father", bān means "village" and hence po-bān stands for the "head of the village", or village elder. Among the Laotian Tai he was called by pho bān or nai bān, the White Tai by tao bān, and the Red Tai by tao pang. Frank M. Lebar et al., op. cit., pp.218,225,227.

12 Po means "father", ruen means "household", hence po-ruen together means "the head of the household". The Red Tai designated him as cha bān. Ibid., p.227.
held by the families directly from the po'-bäns. Theoretically in the event of death or departure of a po'-ruen, the land be held was reverted to the mön for redistribution, but in practice, land was only transferred to his successor.

In the type of state as mön was the number of population was not large. Consequently, the services of all the able-bodied adult male population of the mön had to be requisitioned. In fact, except those who held offices, the burden of physical labour fell on the luk-bän, who performed both civil and military duties and thus constituted the base of the Tai state. The services of all the eligible persons, at a time, were, however, not only not possible but also not practicable. For this purpose, a small squad of 3 persons was formed and a system of rotation was followed. One member of the squad was obliged to perform, for four months, such work as might be required of him, and during his absence from home, the other members were expected to cultivate his land and keep his family supplied with food. Each person was assigned a certain portion of land, where he

13 McAlister, op.cit., p.779.

14 Luk means "children", hence luk-bän means "children of the village", or the "people of the village".

15 For the rest of the months they were free to seek their own living by trade or agriculture.
and his family could grow their food. Besides, they were obliged to give a part of their time for service to those from whom they held their land and delivered a portion of their product to them and hence to the chāo at the top. They received protection from their lord, who in imitation of the chāo, carried on, within their limited sphere jurisdiction, a parental and undifferential form of administration.

The chāo was considered to be the po'-khun, or the father of the khun, while the lesser officers were known as luk-khun, or the children of the khun. The chāo treated the po'-bān, like his children and in the same way pp'-bān treated po'-ruen as his children.

In course of time, where condition appeared favourable, ambitious chāo-mōngs carried on territorial expansion and absorbed some weak or smaller mōngs. This process led to the formation of kingdoms. One such well known instance is the Nan-chāo kingdom in Yun-nan founded by a Tai prince named Meng-she in the seventh century A.D. This he did by amalgamating about seven Tai mōngs into one bigger mōng. Nan-chāo

16 Po'-khun and luk-khun means the "father of khun" and "the children of the khun" respectively. H.G. Quaritch Wales, Ancient Siamese Government and Administration, p. 68.
17 TTK, p. 61.
kingdom was one of the earliest examples of the rise of the small mông-state into big mông, or kingdom, although during the same period the large majority of the Tai môngs still remained small. Much later several new Tai kingdoms rose to power such as Mông-kang (Mogaung), Mông-nai, Mông Sukhodaya and Mông-dun-sun-kham (Assam).

The transformation of mông from small state into large kingdom had been followed by several other changes. In certain respects, the Tais seem to have been influenced by the Chinese concept of the "Son of Heaven" who admitted no equal on earth. The chāo-mông, or the lord of the mông now received the new and honorific appellation of chāo-phā. The result was the deification of the chāo-phā, his exaltation by elaborate royal ceremonies and his isolation and protection by taboos. The title chāo was also applied to princes and the officials of the highest rank next to the chāo-phā. Slowly new gradations and more titles came into existence, such as thāo-mông, thāo, phu-kin-mông, ru-ring, ru-pāk, ru-sāo and so on.

The large mông, or kingdom was now divided into provinces and districts, some of which were assigned to the princes of the royal family, who ruled them in the pattern of the mông. Other provinces were allotted to the certain nobles, who were closely connected with the administration.

It was this system of government, which Siu-kā-phā and his associates had planted in their newly founded kingdom.
The king was the chāo, or the "lord" of the land and his people, and was the head of the state. He belonged to the hereditary royal family, which claimed its descent from Khun-lung and Khun-lāi, the two legendary Khuns, who were sent down from the "Heaven" by their grandfather Lengdon, the "Lord of Heaven" to rule on earth. This belief in heaven-born origin of the Ahom royal family had been so-deeply rooted among the Ahom people that during the next six hundred years of their rule there never was an attempt made by any non-royal Ahom to usurp the Ahom throne. Following this tradition, the Ahom people always referred to their king not by any of his given names but by the honorific appellation of chāo-phā meaning (chāo = "lord", phā = "sky") the "Lord of the sky", which has been in use among the many Tais of South-East Asia. Considering the long and widespread prevalence of the term chāo-phā in the sense of "divine descent" it is difficult to agree with

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19 This "heaven descent" origin of the Tai royal families is also current among the Tais of northern Vietnam, southern China and the Shan States of Burma. Georges Condomines, "Passing among the Mountain Tais", paper read at the International Conference on Thai Studies held at New Delhi in February, 1981; also his "Essai sur l'évolution des systèmes politique thais", Ethnos Vol.41:1-IV, 1976, p.32.

Padmeswar Gogoi that the Tais had no such tradition before the Ahoms (Tai) were converted to Hinduism long after their arrival in Assam. Much later this title was translated into Assamese as svarqadeo (svarqa="heaven", deo="lord") i.e. "the Lord of the Heaven".

The king was advised and assisted by two chief councilors, one bore the title Chāo-phrang-mōng and the other Chāo-thao-mōng-lung. They were consulted on all matters of the state; in case of emergency, foreign invasion, declaration of war and conclusion of peace, the king always convened a great council consisting of all the councillors and officers of rank, and the decision was taken after due deliberation of the matter. The king was the president of the council. The councillors often acted as commanders of the army and leaders of expedition. On his way, when the Nagas of the Pat-kai did not submit, Siu-kā-phā's two chief councillors led expedition against them. Below the two chief councillors, other nobles and chief officers bore titles, such as, khun, thāo-mōng, thāo, phu-kin-mōng and ru-pāk. It is recorded in the chronicles that Siu-kā-phā was accompanied by at least eight categories

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21 TTK, p.542.
22 A-B, p.45.
23 A-B, pp.25,44-45; DAB, pp.6-7; SAB, pp.45-46; AB(SM), pp.4-5.
of Khuns, such as Khun-lak, Khun-tang, Khun-ba, Khun-phrang, Khun-ring, Khun-sheng, Khun-phu-ken, Khun-tai-kang; five thāo-mōngs such as; Thāo-mōng Shu-khen, Thāo-mōng Mang-khan, Thāo-mōng Keu-khan, Thāo-mōng Bang-kham, Thāo-mōng Maw-sai; one thāo i.e. Thāo Maw-sam; phu-kin-mōngs of five mōngs e.g. of Mōng-kham, Mōng-khru-doi, Mōng-kha Mōng-pum, Mōng-kha and Mōng-li. The names of the phu-kin-mōngs were Ta-khun-lak, Khun-klang, Pha-lung Khun-tong, Kang-khu-mōng, and Kan-ngan.

Later on a few of the titles, however, either fallen into disuse or used in different context. For instance, the title Khun was used in the case of the chiefs of the neighbouring states and tribes subordinate to the Ahoms. It was prefixed to the names of the Rajas of Kamata, the Kachari, the Chutiya and the chiefs of Naga, whereas in the fourteenth century Thailand, the term Khun was applied to ministers.

All the adult male population were obliged to render their services to the state. For this purpose all able bodied...
males above the age of 15 were registered. For administrative convenience, the registered persons were grouped into units of 3 called khing (later on it was called got in Assamese language). The khing was further enlarged into 20,100 and 1000 under the control and charge of three different gradations of officers. A unit of 20 khing was placed under the command of a ru-sāo meaning (ru="head", sāo=20) "the head of twenty", a unit of 100 khing was commanded by a ru-pāk (ru="head", pāk=100) "the head of one hundred", and a unit of 1000 khing by a ru-ring (ru="head, ring=1000) "the head of one thousand". Much later, these officers had their Assamese titles of bara, saikia, and hazarika.

As the requisition of services of all the kuns (serviceable persons, later on called pāik) at a time was not feasible, a system of rotation was devised by which one kun in a khing rendered his physical service for four months only. In time of war, the kuns were engaged as soldiers, but in time of peace they were employed in public works. They served, thus, according to the requirement and convenience of the government. The payment of salary was not known; all those

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28 The reference in the chronicles that Siu-kā-phā had brought with him three thousands matangs (cooking pots), each was sufficient to cook food for three men may be taken to mean just this that a khing consisted of three and a pot was used for one khing. A-B, p.44; DAB, p.6.
who were employed for various state services were assigned with land of varying quantity - the higher the rank, the greater was the amount, the common man (kun) received an acre of land for wet-rice cultivation.

To each department was assigned the services of certain number of men, according to its requirements. The more important departments were manned by a larger number of men.

Siu-kā-phā's kingdom, Mong-dun-sun-kham comprised of several lesser möng-units. The möng-units or the provinces had been placed under möng-chiefs bearing the title thāo-möng. Chronologically, the founding of the möng-units preceded the möng-kingdom. This means that on the way to the Brahmaputra valley he created the möng-units which formed his kingdom (möng). The process he followed was that after arriving at a place with his followers, if the place was found suitable for settlement and defence, he stayed there for a couple of years. During this time, his followers engaged themselves in the production of food and other necessary articles as well as consolidated their position. At the same time, whenever necessary, the local inhabitants of the surrounding areas were brought under their submission. For the administration of the area, a system of government was organised under one of his chiefs with the title thāo-möng. Leaving the place with the rest of his followers, Siu-kā-phā marched to another place some distance away and settled there for another couple of years with his
followers. This place, too, was organized in the same manner as the previous one. Leaving this place under the care of another chief as thāo-mōng with a number of men to assist him, he proceeded to yet another place and settled there for some years. In this way he founded thāo-mōngs which became mōng-units of his kingdom.

As stated in the last chapter, the first mōng founded by Siu-kā-phā was Mōng Kham-jang at the Kham-jang valley surrounding the lake Nong-yang. Thereafter he founded Mōng La-khen-ten-sa, Mōng Ti-pam, Mōng Che-khrū, Mōng Habung, Mōng-rin Mōng-ching, Simaluguri, Mōng-ti-na-mao before finally settling himself at Charaideo. All these mōngs except the last three had been placed under thāo-mōngs.

The kingdom founded by Siu-kā-phā, thus, constituted of about seven mōng-units, or what may be called provinces each under a thāo-mōng who administered it with the help of his subordinates in the manner his chāo-phā, the "lord of Heaven" did in the capital. In geographical location, the mōngs formed a ring around the capital mōng. Any attack by an enemy first fell on these mōngs. From time to time a thāo-mōng had to visit the capital at Charaideo, pay homage to the chāo-phā and take an oath of allegiance. In time of war or necessity, the thāo-mōngs had to command their own units of men as directed by the chāo-phā.
The rearrangement of the administration was required following the Siu-hum-mōng's conquest of the territories of the Chutiyas, the Kacharis and some petty Bhuyan chiefs on both banks of the Brahmaputra. The Chutiya kingdom was turned into the Ahom province of Mōng Tio-ra and that of the Kacharisa became the Ahom province of Mōng Marangi and the territory of the Bhuyan chiefstains, Mōng Sala, each under a governor or thāo-mōng called Thāo-mōng Tio-ra, Thāo-mōng Marangi and Thāo-mōng Sala respectively. With the creation of new and large mōngs (provinces), the older mōngs (provinces) such as Mōng Tipam, Mōng Che-khru and other mōngs which lay close to the capital mōng and which had been governed by members of the non-royal families, were now assigned to the princes of the royal blood preferably sons and brothers of the ruling monarch. While the newly created provinces like Mōng Tio-ra, Mōng Marangi, Mōng Sala and also other outlaying provinces were kept under thāo-mōngs who belonged to old non-royal but noble families. In this way, thāo-mōngs who had earlier been given mōngs adjacent to the capital or the inner circle of the kingdom were now pushed to the outer circle of the territory, whereas the mōngs of the inner circle were assigned to the members of the royal family. This change of the Ahom Government had certain advantages. First, it provided for the assignments to the increasing number of princes. It was a custom among the Ahoms, as among the Tai, that the princes should reside outside the palace when they attained a certain
age normally 14 years. Secondly, as the capital was now surrounded by möngs under the royal family, it strengthened the centre. Thirdly, it also provided precaution against the revolt of the princes, who would be at close watch of the monarch. An exactly similar system was found in the Siamese Government where areas adjacent to the centre ruled by the sons of the king.

Corresponding to these changes and also to meet the increasing demand of work at the higher level, a new post under the title of Chăo-sheng-lung was created. Considering the importance of this office, it was assigned to a blood relation of the ruling monarch. Since then it had been held by his descendants, and thus became hereditary. In position and power the newly created office was the same as that of the other two chief councillors. With this, the number of chief councillors was raised to three e.g. Chăo-phrăng-möng and Chăo-thào-möng-lung, and Chăo-sheng-lung. Later on, they were called Buragohain, Bargohain, and Barpatragohain respectively or simply Gohains in Assamese.

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²⁹ H.G. Quaritch Wales, Siamese State Ceremonies, pp. 40-41.
³⁰ H.G. Quaritch Wales, Ancient Siamese Government and Administration, p. 103.
A further expansion of the kingdom during the reign of Siu-seng-phā brought the Ahoms into contact with more states and powers like the Jayantiyas and Bhutan and the Mughals with a serious armed conflict with the last named. To meet new demands, administrative as well as political, two new high posts were created, one titled Phu-ke-lung, which came to be known as Barbarua in Assamese, the other Phu-kan-lung, which came to be known as Barphukan in Assamese. The territory from the eastern confines to Kaliyabar in central Assam with the exception of the provinces placed under Chāo-sheng-lung, Chāo-phrang-mōng, Chāo-thao-mōng-lung, and also the mōngs assigned to the members of the royal family was placed under his jurisdiction in matters of revenue and judiciary. In addition he acted as the secretary to the king. According to Captain Welsh, who came to the Ahom kingdom in 1792, "The Burra Baruah commanded the forces, received the revenues, and administered the justice of the upper provinces from Suddea on the eastern confines to Kolliabar in the Dacianpah and Darung in Ooterpah with an exception in favour of the provinces under the Gohains". The jurisdiction of

31 In the letter (Appendix III) of the Kachari ruler, Krishnachandra, of 1795, he was addressed as aacibabaresu, Tu.B, p.138; Francis Hamilton, An Account of Assam, ed. by S.K. Bhuyan, Gauhati, 1940, p.24.

32 Capt.Welsh's Report on Assam, 1794, p.3; S.K.Bhuyan says that he was the head of the executive and the judiciary. AAR, p.9.
Phu-kan-lung included the tract to the west of Kaliabar as far as Goalpara. At first his headquarters was fixed at Kaliabar but afterwards shifted to Gauhati. He was also the viceroy of the king and in that capacity he conducted diplomatic relations with the neighbouring tribes and powers.33

With the creation of these two higher posts, the number of the royal councillors increased from three to five. In later period, all of them together were called Patra Mantri.34 Corresponding to the creation of new higher posts, there was also an increase in the number of phu-ke, phu-kan, phu-kin-mög, ru-ring and ru-pák.

During the reigns of Gadadhar Singha and his son Rudra Singha, the state activities had greatly increased. The Mughals, with whom the Ahoms had fought for more than three-quarters of a century, had been finally expelled leading to a further expansion of the Ahom kingdom. Various measures had also been taken to have wider contact with Bengal in a number of spheres like trade, art, music, architecture. Both kings adopted steps to revitalise and reassert the authority of the monarch which had fallen to a disrepute during the preceding period. In order to meet these requirements, the

33Ibid.
34Capt. Welsh's Report on Assam, 1794, p. 3.
administration was overhauled and several new posts had been created during the reign of Rudra Singha which included among others Nyayasodha Phukan, Na Phukan, Bairagi Phukan, Dolchoa Phukan, and Khound.

Some chronicles compiled at the beginning of the British rule give details of the Ahom royal court, power and privileges of the councillors and also hierarchy of the administration as they stood towards the end of the Ahom rule. The king (chao-phah) still remained, the master of his people, owner of land, and was at the apex of the administration. The king had the right to regulate everything for his subjects. His command was supreme and penetrated to every sphere of their life. His jurisdiction was unlimited and he was the law-making machinery. A formal distinction between the chao-phah (svarga-deo) and the crown did not exist. The crown meant the power of the king which depended on the ability of the person who occupied the throne. Those who had no ability but sat on the throne became puppets in the hands of the councillors, higher officials as in cases of Tao-kham-thi and the chao-phas, who came to throne between 1673 and 1681. Towards the second

35DAB, p.11; A-B, pp.229-262.
second half of the eighteenth century, there was a decline of the power of the chāo-phā, mainly due to the internal disturbances and the incapacibilities of the kings. This led to an increase of the power of the royal councillors. Captain Welsh witnessed such a situation which made him to remark that the form of government was monarchial and aristocratic.  

The foreign policy of the kingdom was the exclusive corner of the king. Any contract made by his officials with any foreign power without his express consent was of no value as it was not binding upon the monarch. The foreign envoys had to wait on the king's pleasure as the time and mode of their reception were determined by him. The chāo-phā's personal rule was further secured by the use of the seal, the most formal and frequently used instrument of the administration. Without its stamp hardly any document could its validity. No doubt, the king issued orders and made appointments verbally through his messengers who were generally furnished with a token of their royal master; still every important paper had to be sealed with royal seal, which was an expression of the royal will.

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36 Captain Welsh's Report on Assam, 1794, p.3; William Robinson, A Descriptive Account of Assam, Delhi, 1841, p.189.

37 AB(HB), p.123.
Although the king was the lord of his kingdom, enjoying, in theory, an absolute power over the land and people but, in practice, he was to act like a father in his relations with his subjects. The Ahom kings tried to follow faithfully the advice given by Lengdong, the legendary ruler of the Heaven, to his grandsons Khun-lung and Khun-lāi, the progenitors of the Ahom kings, when they were sent down to the earth. The principle that underlies Lengdon's advice is "just as a mother bird guards her nestlings with her wings and protects them from rain and storm, and rear them up by feeding them herself, so you two brothers should protect your subjects and desist from quarreling with your friends and supporters."  

At the time of installing a new king and also in the coronation, instructions were imparted to the king about the basic duties which he was expected to discharge. One of such instruction was "Cherish and protect your subjects as your own children."  

Succession to the throne was hereditary in the male line and in normal situation the eldest son of the king born

38 DAB, p. 2.
39 Tu. B., pp. 41-42, also as quoted by S.K. Bhuyan in Atan Buragohain and His Times, Gauhati, 1957, p. 3.
of the chăo-nang-lung (the chief queen, who normally belonged to the nobility) succeeded the ruling monarch after his death. A parallel is noticed in the succession to the Siamese throne by the eldest son of the superior queen. But if he was found incompetent or incapacitated he was superseded by younger ones. Thus Siu-ching-phā (1644-1648) was superseded by his younger brother Siu-rām-phā (1641-1644). In the same way brother took precedence of sons, as in the cases of the four sons of Rudra Śiṅgha who became king one after another, in conformity with, as it is claimed, the death-bed injunction of the late monarch. In absence of an eligible prince among the late king's brothers and sons, the succession was decided by the chief councillors as in the cases of Siu-teu-phā, Tāo-khām-thi, Siu-dān-g-phā and Siu-pung-mōng. To sit on the throne a prince should be free from any scar or blemish. According to P. Gogoi this theory was locally developed in Assam during the second half of the seventeenth century that being of divine origin the king's person was sacred and perfect.

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40 H.G. Quaritch Wales, Ancient Siamese Government and Administration, p.19.
41 DAB, p.86.
42 AB (HB), p.68.
43 A-B, pp.48-49, 186.
44 TTK, p.542.
It was the custom of the Ahom royal family like other Tai royal families that except the king, other members of the royal family did not take any definite part in the central administration. But they were assigned princely estates (möng) called mela towards the later part of the Ahom rule. The princes, who enjoyed these estates were known after the name of the estates. Thus the prince, who was assigned the Tipamiya Mel was called the Tipam Raja, the prince, who enjoyed the Namrupiya Mel was called the Namrupiya Raja. Other members of the royal family, too, held estates such as Maju Mel and Saru Mel conferred on the younger sons, brothers, or nephews of the monarch. Even the female members of the royal family were allotted estates such as the Raidangiya Mel to the chief queen, the Parbatiya Mel to the second queen, the Purani Mel and Na Mel to other consorts. Daughters, nieces and sisters were assigned to the Gobharu Mel. The queen mother and king’s grandmother were entitled to the Khangiya Mel and Enaighariya Mel respectively. The mela were administered by phukan and barua, according to

46 *Asom Buranji Sara*, p. 67.
their size and importance. They were assisted by other sets of officers in various departments.

The royal council consisting of five members assisted the chão-phâ in the matter of administration. Each councillor was individually responsible to the chão-phâ, but collectively discussed the matters of policy and day-to-day administration. Though the council, which met regularly and was presided over by the king, was merely a consultative body it was not entirely useless. Important matters were discussed here and sought their advice individually or collectively, but the king was not obliged to follow their advice. Every member present here had an opportunity to express his opinion. The council met only on the royal summon and the councillors were forbidden to meet each other without royal sanction. But their power was undoubtedly considerable often enabling them to influence the succession to throne on the death of the chão-phâ. They had the power to make and unmake the king by acting in unison. The councillors were appointed and dismissed by the king. They did not receive cash salary,

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49 AB(KTP), p. 82.
50 TTK, p. 547.
51 AB(KTP), p. 87; AB(HB), p. 70.
52 Ibid., p. 85; Ibid., p. 69.
but insignia from the king and land as well as pāika (service men) to maintain their livelihood and position.

At the state ceremony or reception of foreign envoys, the Buragohain occupied the seat on the left of the throne while Bargohain on the right. Behind Buragohain sat the Barbarua, phukans and some other officers, many of whom headed the civil departments, while Barpatragohain was followed by other thāo-mōng (the provincial governors). The position of the seat indicates that Buragohain and Bargohain were the heads of the civil and military departments in addition to their own duties. Such a form was also found in Thailand during the fourteenth century. There the head of the civil division took his seat on the left of the throne and that of military division on the right and both were known as Agramahasenapati, who had their own departments and subordinates. On occasions of great state ceremony the civil officers were ranged on the left of the throne and military officers on the right.

Besides the councillors, the general administration was run by different categories of phu-ranked officers, like

53 H.G. Quaritch Wales, Ancient Siamese Government and Administration, pp. 75-79.
54 Ibid.
The Barbarua and the Barphukan each had a court consisted of six phukans. Those belonging to the Barbarua's group were Naobaicha Phukan, Bhitarual Phukan, Na Phukan, Dihingiya Phukan, Deka Phukan, Neog Phukan, while those of the Barphukan's included Pani Phukan, Deka Phukan, Dihingiya Phukan, Neog Phukan and Chetiya Phukan. Besides the phukans listed above, there were other phukans headed territorial administration and others acted as heads of departments. Of those in charge of territories were Tipamiya Phukan, who managed the province of Tipam, Raidangiya Phukan, who managed the estate of Raidang, Saringiya Phukan, who managed the province of Saring, Khowang Phukan, who was in charge of Khowang, a sub-division, Kaliabariya Phukan who was administrative head of Kaliyabar. Phukans in charge of civil departments included Choladhara Phukan, the keeper of the royal wardrobe, Kharghariya Phukan, the superintendent of the gun-powder factories, Nausaliya Phukan, the superintendent of the fleet, Tamuli Phukan, in charge of the royal garden, Jalbhari Phukan, in charge of the royal net, Changrung Phukan, the

55 HA, p.248. In his Account of Assam Dr. John Peter Wade, who accompanied Captain Thomas Welsh to the Ahom kingdom in 1792, writes they were "Military Fokuns". Ed. by Benudhar Sharma, North Lakhimpur, 1927, pp.xviii, xxii.
chief engineer. Next to the phukans were the baruas, some of them served under superior officers while others were in charge of independent departments. Tipamiya Barua, Seringiya Barua, Dihingiya Barua, served under their respective phukans, while Rohiyal Barua was in charge of Raha subdivision (in Nowgong), Parbatiya Barua, in charge of Charaideo hill, Chao-dang Barua in charge of Chao-dangs, Kukurachowa Barua, in charge of the fowls, Bharali Barua, in charge of store keepers, Chang-mai Barua, in charge of royal cook, Hati Barua, in charge of elephants, Bhandari Barua in charge of the treasury, Bez Barua, the chief royal physician, Duliya Barua, in charge of the kings palanquins, Khanikar Barua, the chief of artisans and craftsmen, Gandhiya Barua, in charge of the royal record department, Majindar Barua, the publicity officer, Sonadhar Barua, the mint master and chief jeweller. The Barchetiya was the incharge of Marangi province. The rajkhowas were posted at strategically important zones, of the kingdom. Two were placed at Dihing - Panidihingiya Rajkhowa and Tardihingia Rajkhowa, two at Salaguri - Tarsalaguriya Rajkhowa and Pani-salaguriya Rajkhowa, three at Abhoipur - Barabhoipuriya Rajkhowa, Majuabhoipuriya Rajkhowa, Saruabhoipuriya Rajkhowa, three at Dayang - Upardayangiya Rajkhowa, Majudayangiya Rajkhowa, Namdayangiya Rajkhowa, one at Ghiladhari - Ghiladhari Rajkhowa. Among others were the three classes of messengers, or kataki - bar-kataki, maju kataki, saru kataki, and three categories
of writers, or kakati - bar kakati, chang kakati and pakhi kakati. Besides, there were khaund (connected with the death rites of the kings), bairagis (roving information collector), dolais (connected with temples). The baragis were also sent as envoy to foreign countries.

The paik system, till the end of their rule remained the same. In the beginning of the seventeenth century with the expansion of the territory the population was also increased. Siu-seng-phā reorganised the paik system and put four persons in a unit instead of earlier three, but it was again reduced to three in upper Assam during the reign of Rajesvar Singha. Whenever a levy was required for either public work or warfare the first men of the unit was drawn. In case of more persons required the second person of the squad was collected, in cases of great emergency the third men was drawn for state services. The levy of the first person of the unit was called a mul, the second dawal and the third tewal. The paiks were, again, organized into khel system which was comparable to work-guides, each doing a particular kind of work for the State.

57 SAB, p.77; PAB, p.60.