There had been a large number of petty tribal kingdoms belonging to the different sub-tribes of the Tibeto-Burman race as well as the Jaintiyas before the coming of the Ahoms. There had been also several principalities under the Bar-Bhuyans in the Brahmaputra valley. The Ahoms occupied some of these kingdoms and annexed them to their territory. Several others comprising the present day districts of Nowgong, Morigaon, Kamrup, Sonitpur and Darrang offered their submission on their own to the Ahoms. Thus they became the vassal kingdoms of the Ahoms. The number of these kingdoms was more than 72.

The history of these kingdoms has not been studied in its true perspective and importance. The history of medieval Assam without the history of these kingdoms is certain to remain an insular history of a particular people/tribe/society. Assam has been a meeting place of different races, tribes and peoples. It has been the home of different and disparate aboriginal and indigenous tribes. These tribes developed into clans and to kingdoms.

Their emergence from tribes to clans and then to kingdoms has been an interesting field of study of the history of Assam. The study has its relevance, again in view of the fact that a sense of ethnic revivalism has become a powerful ideology among many of the tribes/ethnic groups for the assertion of their political rights and power in Assam.

The study has been made on the basis of field survey, documentary evidences, inscriptions, family history or genealogical accounts called (Goid Puthis), extant historical literature, ballads, legends and traditional accounts. The study has been divided into eight chapters dealing with different aspects of these kingdoms. While working on the subject I visited almost all the vassal kingdoms, met many of the family members of the former ruling chiefs/kings,
collected and verified information and have seen weapons like jevlines and swords, copper plates, utensils, dresses and costumes, manuscripts on witchcrafts and sorcery, religious books written on sanchi bark, ornaments and jewellery, ponds, dula or palki, shields made of buffalo hide and rhino skin, handlooms, different kinds of fishing implements, idols of gods and goddesses, grinding machine of different types, etc.

In connection with this study I had occasions to visit the library of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Guwahati; the State Central Library, Guwahati; the State Archives, Dispur, Guwahati; the District Library, Morigaon; the District Library, Nowgong; the Tezpur College Library, Tezpur; the Morigaon College Library, Morigaon; the Jagiroad College Library, Jagiroad; and the Dimorua College Library, Kshetri. I am grateful to the Principals, Librarians and staff of these libraries for their kind help and cooperation.

I am specially grateful to Dr. Ramesh Chandra Kalita, my guide, for his keen interest and painstaking guidance in the course of the study. I also owe a word of gratefulness to Dr (Mrs.) Jayashri Kalita, Lecturer, Selection Grade and Head, Department of Economics, Tezpur College, Tezpur, for her kind and warm hospitality and encouragement as and when I met her.

I am grateful to Sjt. Maneswar Deuri- my teacher in school days- a reputed scholar in Sanskrit and himself a researcher in the life and society of the Thwa (Lalung) people. I also take the opportunity to express my thankful gratitude to late lamented Harsewar Deka, Dr. Jiten Das, Director of Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Guwahati; to Dambaru Deka, Una Deka, Badaruddin Ahmed, Maznurul Haque, Nur Muhammad, Monowara Begum, Deben Chandra Kalita, Rizomoni Deka, Monika Saikia, Bijoya Deka, Anjali Das, Jogeswari Borah, Anupama Borah, A, Manoram Medhi, Fazlur Rahman, Helim Hussain, Hazarat Ali, Nekib Ahmed, Mubarak Ali, Ranjina Begum, Baladev Nath, Gahan Borah, Pramode
Tamuli, Kamal Nath, Mina Sarma, Golap Bhagawati and Navaram Nath
for their help and co-operation in the course of the study.

(Hatem Ali)