CHAP. II.]

HISTORY.

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It is doubtful whether at any period the whole of the country which is now known as the district of Nowgong was a separate polity under its own ruler, and its history has to be considered in connection with that of the various states of which from time to time it formed a part. It was originally included in the ancient Hindu kingdom of Kamarupa, which is mentioned in the Mahabharata, and which at one time occupied North Eastern Bengal, and a great part of what is now known as the Province of Assam. About the tenth century A.D. the northern portion of the district seems to have formed part of the territories of a powerful and civilized line of Pala kings. But even at that date Kachari princes were ruling in the Kapili valley, and, though they were conquered by the Ahoms in the sixteenth century, they continued to hold this
portion of the district as feudatory chiefs, till it passed into our hands with the rest of Assam in 1826. In the middle of the sixteenth century, the northern part of Nowgong began to pass into the sphere of Ahom influence, though, for a time at any rate, it was overrun by the Koches and Muhammadans, and it was not till about 1685, A.D. that the Ahoms finally expelled the Musalmans from Kamrup, and established their rule over the five upper districts of the Assam Valley.

According to the Yogini Tantra, the kingdom of Kamarupa extended from the Karatoya river on the western boundaries of Rangpur to the Dikrai in the east of the Darrang district. It was divided into four portions, i.e., Kamapith from the Karatoya to the Sankosh, Ratnapith from the Sankosh to the Rupahi, Suvarnapith from the Rupahi to the Bhareli, and Sauarpith from the Bhareli to the Dikrai. The earliest king of Kamarupa of whom anything in particular is recorded is Naruk, who is said to have been the son of the earth by Vishnu, and who defeated and slew his predecessor Ghatak.* He established his capital at Pragjyotishpura, the modern Gauhati, and seems to have been a powerful and prosperous, though somewhat headstrong prince. He was appointed the guardian of Kamakhya, and his name still lives amongst the people as the builder of the causeway up the southern face of the hill Nilachal, on which the temple of Kamakhya

* An account of the early kings of Kamarupa will be found in the Koch Kings of Kamarupa by Mr. E. A. Gait, published in J. A. B., Vol. LXII, Part I, No. 4, 1893.
stands. His power and presumption were such that he asked Kamakhya to marry him, and the goddess consented, on the understanding that he would construct for her a temple, a road, and a tank in a single night. He was on the point of completing this task, when Kamakhya made a cock crow before the usual hour, and the place about eight miles north of Gauhati,* at which Narak in his rage killed the cock, is still known as Kukurakata (the place where the cock was killed). He was succeeded by his son Bhagadatta, who is mentioned in the Mahabharata as fighting on the side of the Kauravas at the great battle of Kurukshetra, and we thus seem justified in assuming that fully a thousand years before Christ, Nowgong formed part of a powerful kingdom ruled by a line of non-Aryan princes.

Further information with regard to the rulers of Kamarupa is given in certain copper plates, which on palaeographical grounds have been assigned to the eleventh century A. D.† These plates are valuable evidence as to the state of the country at the time at which they were engraved, but their account of the genealogy of the reigning king must obviously be received with some degree of caution. The dynasty of Narak is said to have been displaced by Cala Stambha, a Mleccha or foreign conqueror, whose line ended in the person of Sri Harisa, and was succeeded by another family of foreign princes, the first of whom was Pralambha and

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* A hill near Silghat is also called Kukurakata for the same cause.
the last Tyaga Singh. The dynasty of Narak was then restored in the person of Brahmapala. The invasion of the Mlecchas and their subsequent expulsion not improbably corresponds with the great irruption of the Bodos, who, according to their own traditions were at one time ruling at Gauhati and were subsequently driven eastwards to Dimapur, but the whole of this period is involved in great obscurity.

In 640 A.D. Hiuen Tsiang visited Assam, and the record of his travels affords a momentary glimpse of the conditions of the country, a glimpse which is not unlike the view afforded by a flash of lightning on a dark and stormy night. The landscape, which has been shrouded in impenetrable gloom, is suddenly disclosed to view, and with equal rapidity is engulfed again in the blackest darkness; and nothing definite is known of the fortunes of Assam and its inhabitants, either immediately before or after the visit of the great Chinese traveller. The country seems to have advanced some distance on the path of civilization. The soil was deep and fertile, the towns surrounded by moats, the people fierce in appearance but upright and studious. Hinduism was the national religion, and, though Buddhism was not prohibited, its milder tenets had comparatively few followers.

A prince whose name is still remembered in Nowgong is Jangal Balahu. His father was the famous Arimatta, the son of a queen of Pratappur who was handed over to the embraces of the Brahmaputra, and who was sent by his mother to live on the south bank of that river.
He became a powerful king, unwittingly slew his putative father, and was in his turn accidentally killed by his son Jangal.* But this is only one of several versions of the story of Arimatta, and even the date at which he lived is most uncertain, one account referring him to the eighth and another to the thirteenth century A.D. Jangal’s capital was in the Sahari mauza, about two miles west of Raha, where the remains of considerable earthworks, which are said to have surrounded his palace, are to be seen even at the present day. He was engaged in constant feuds with the Kacharis, by whom he was finally defeated and killed. Several places situated on the Kalang are said to derive their names from incidents in his flight. At Raha he stopped to drink, at Jagi he appeared above the water as he was being carried down by the current, and at Kajalimukh, at the junction of the Kalang and the Brahmaputra, he died, pierced by a kajali bamboo.†

Arimatta and Jangal Balahu are but the heroes of popular tradition, and the legends that surround their names are of little historical importance. More light is thrown upon the internal conditions of Nowgong a thousand years ago, by the inscriptions on a copper plate which was dug up on the banks of the Kalang opposite Puranigudam, and which on palæographical grounds has been assigned to the latter end of the tenth

* A fuller account of Arimatta will be found in the Gazetteer of the Darrang district.
† Vidis an interesting account of the Koch Kings of Kamarupa by Mr. E. A. Gait, c.s., J. A. S. B. Vol. LXII, Part I, No. 4 of 1893.
It records the grant of a piece of land to a Brahman by a king called Balavarman, who lived in the camp of Haruppesvara near the Brahmaputra river. Little is said of the king’s capital, and the author of the plate sounds a more modest note than the scribe who on the Bargaon plate recounts the glories of Ratnapala the ruler of Durjaya (probably modern Tezpur.) There are, however, no remains in Nowgong to suggest that it ever at any time contained the capital of a really powerful prince, and possibly Balavarman was only a minor Raja of no great wealth or influence. The inscription on the plate suggests, however, that Nowgong was administered by a well organised and civilized government, much in advance of anything that could be evolved by the aboriginal tribes that at present form so large a proportion of the population, though possibly not superior to the Ahom administration before it was destroyed by rebellion from within and invasion from without. Notification of the grant is issued to “the Brahmans and other castes, headed by the district revenue officials and their clerks,” and the easements to which the grantee was entitled are described in full detail. The land was confirmed to him “with its houses, paddy fields, dry land, water, cattle pastures, refuse land, etc.” All persons were prohibited from trespass, including “eunuchs, grand ladies, and any other person that may cause trouble on account of the fastening of elephants, the fastening of boats, the searching for thieves,* * * the realising of tenants’ taxes

† For a full account of this plate see J. A. S. B., Vol LXVI, Part I, No. 4 p. 285.
and impost, and the providing of room for the royal umbrella.” It is possible that these precise injunctions were merely borrowed from the formulae employed for grants of this description in the great kingdoms of the west, but if they had any application to the conditions actually existing at the time, it is evident that the Nowgong of the tenth century was very different from the Nowgong from which the British expelled the Burmese in 1825.

The plate is valuable as throwing some light upon the conditions of Nowgong, but it tells us but little of the history of the district. At the time at which it was engraved the Kacharis were in all probability an important power, at any rate in the Kapili valley, and some account must now be given of the origin and development of the Kachari kingdom.

The Kacharis or Bora, (mispronounced Bodo) as they call themselves, belong to the great Bodo tribe, which is found not only in the Brahmaputra Valley, but in the Garo Hills and in Hill Tipperah south of the Surma Valley. It is generally supposed that they are a section of the Indo-Chinese race, whose original habitat was somewhere between the upper waters of the Yang-tse-kiang and the Hoang-ho, and that they gradually spread in successive waves of immigration over the greater part of what is now the Province of Assam. This theory has much to recommend it though, as a matter of fact, apart from the southward movement of the Miris and Chutiyas, most of the tribal migrations of which we have actual knowledge have been from
the south towards the north. This was the direction of the Ahom invasion in the thirteenth century, the traditions of the Nagas all represent them as coming from the south, and the northward movement of the Kuki tribes was only stopped by the intervention of the British Government. On the other hand, Mr. Dundas quotes a prayer used by the Dimasa, or Kacharis of the North Cachar Hills, which supports the view that the tribe came from the north-east. It refers to a huge peepul tree growing near the confluence of the Dilaọ (Brahmaputra) and the Sagi. There the Kacharis were born and increased greatly in numbers, and thence they travelled by land and water till they reached Nilachal, the hill near Gauhati on which the temple of Kamakhya stands. From Gauhati they migrated to Halali and finally settled in Dimapur. It has been already suggested that the Mleccha chief who overthrew the line of Narak may have been the Kachari king, and it is not unlikely that when driven from Gauhati they should have retreated to the valley of the Dhansiri and have established their capital at Dimapur. It was possibly at this time that the race who are somewhat loosely denominated Kachari split up into two sections, and it seems doubtful whether the Kacharis who live on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, were ever in any way connected with the king of Dimapur. The one tribe style themselves Bara, the other Dimasa, and though both use languages of Bodo origin, the difference between plains Kachari and Dimasa is greater than that between French and Spanish. The two tribes sprang no doubt from the same stock, but there
is no evidence to show that the Kacharis of Darrang were ever subjects of the historical Kachari kingdom, or that they are more closely connected with the Kacharis of North Cachar than are the Rabhas and Lalungs, who are also members of the Bodo race. Even in Nowgong there is a marked distinction between the two sections of the tribe. The Kacharis of north Nowgong are Bodos, while those in the south are called Hojai Kacharis and are akin to the Dimasa.

The following legend which is prevalent amongst the Dimasa, would account for the separation of the Bodo and Dimasa, but no traces of the story have been found amongst the Kacharis of Darrang. "Long ago, the Dimasa fought against a powerful tribe and were beaten in a pitched battle. They were compelled to give ground but after a time further retreat was barred by a wide and deep river. In despair the king resolved to fight again on the following day, but in the night a god appeared to him and told him that the next morning the army could cross the river if they entered it at a spot where they saw a heron standing on the bank. No one, however, was to look back while the movement was in progress. The dream proved true. A heron was seen standing on the bank and the king and a great portion of his people crossed in safety. A man then turned to see whether his son was following, when the waters suddenly rose and swept away those who were in the river bed and prevented the others from crossing. The Dimasa were those who succeeded in reaching the further bank in safety."
At the beginning of the thirteenth century, when the Ahoms first made their appearance in the Assam Valley, the Kacharis seem to have been a powerful tribe occupying the valleys of the Dhansiri and Kapili and ruling over the western portion of Sibsagar and the southern and eastern portions of Nowgong. The remains of their capital at Dimapur * clearly show that they had advanced a considerable distance on the path of civilization. It is now buried in dense tree jungle, and the tract of land lying between the Mikir Hills and the Assam Range, which was formerly part of the Kachari kingdom, is a howling wilderness almost destitute of inhabitants, but it was apparently not so sparsely peopled some centuries ago. The upper portion of the Kapili valley is now the site of a few scattered hamlets of Mikirs and Kacharis, but the ruins of tanks, some of them of considerable size, are to be seen on every side. Even more interesting remains are to be found near the Jurijan, a little to the south of Jamumamukh, in the shape of a fort and three temples built of large blocks of stone and adorned with bas-reliefs and carvings. It must, however, be borne in mind that native rulers often constructed works of considerable size, more for self-glorification than from any idea that they would serve a useful purpose, and it would not be safe to infer that the population was actually as dense as the number and size of the drinking tanks might at first suggest. An army which was sent by Rudra Singh up the Kapili

* Dimapur is situated on the Dhansiri on the western borders of Sibsagar. An account of the ruins will be found in the Gazetteer of that district.
valley in 1706 A.D., seems to have advanced but slowly, and the path had apparently to be cleared through jungle. Five days were consumed in the journey from Jamuna fort to Tetelikhara chauki, a distance of six miles, and there is nothing in the Ahom chronicles to suggest that this part of the country was ever densely peopled in the sense in which that term is usually understood in India.

The first collision between the Ahoms and the Kacharis occurred in 1490 A.D., when the Ahom king Suhangpha was defeated and driven across the Dikho. The fact that the battle was fought in the eastern part of the Sibsagar district, affords some indication of the power of the Kacharis at the end of the fifteenth century and the distance at which they could make their influence felt. Their successes were not, however, of long duration. War soon broke out again, and in 1536 A.D. the Ahoms advanced up the Dhansiri, killed the Kachari king Detsung, and sacked his capital at Dimapur. From this time forward the Kachari princes occupied the position of feudatory chiefs. Their capital was removed first to Maibang in the North Cachar Hills, and afterwards to Khaspur on the southern side of the Barail, and their subsequent history will be found in the Gazetteer of the Cachar district. It is, however, clear that in his tributary capacity the Kachari king held the valley of the Kapili, till it was finally annexed by the British in 1826 A.D. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, during the reign of Kamaleswar Singh, the Kacharis and Moamarias attacked
the Ahoms near Raha, and the Kapili valley even at that time was described as Kachari territory.*

But, whatever may have been the fate of the Kapili valley, the northern portion of Nowgong came, for a time at any rate, under the Koch kings of Kamarupa. The founder of the Koch kingdom was a Mech named Viswa Singh, who is said to have been the son of Hira, the wife of one Haria Mandal, by Siva, who assumed the shape of her husband, and thus induced her to admit him to her embraces. Viswa Singh subdued the petty princes who surrounded him, founded a magnificent city in Kuch Bihar, and reduced his state to order. He is said to have marched against the Ahoms, but to have abandoned the expedition owing to the collapse of his commissariat; but the Ahom version, which states that he was defeated and made tributary, seems a more probable explanation of the failure of the expedition.

Viswa Singh died after a reign of 25 years, and was succeeded in 1534 A.D., by his son Malla Deva who assumed the name of Nar Narayan. The reign of this prince represents the zenith of the Koch power, and his armies, which were led by his brother Sukladwaj or Silarai, met with almost unvarying success. He first attacked the Ahoms, but, mindful of his father's failure, commenced his operations by building a great military road along the north bank of the Brahmaputra, and constructing tanks at regular intervals along it.

*The Ahom general was named Haripod Deka Phukan, and his grandchildren are still alive. As a reward the general was granted an estate of 8,000 bighas which is situated in the Mikirbheta mauza.
The work was entrusted to his brother, Gohain Kamala, and the road, much of which is still in existence, bears the name of Gohain Kamala Ali to the present day. Nar Narayan entered the Ahom capital Gargaon (the modern Nazira), and did not leave till he had received the submission of the Ahom king. The Kachari Raja and the Raja of Manipur were then reduced to the position of feudatory chiefs, and the kings of Jaintia, Tippera, and Sylhet conquered and slain. Further successes were obtained over the rulers of Khairam and Dimuria, but the tide of fortune turned when an attack was made on the kingdom of Gaur. The Koch army was routed and Silarai himself made prisoner. Nar Narayan would not, however, accept this defeat as final, and a few years later joined with the Emperor Akbar in a second attack upon the Pasha of Gaur. This enterprise was crowned with success, and Gaur was divided between the Emperor of Delhi and the Koch king. But the power of the Koches declined as rapidly as it had risen, and, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Nowgong was harried by the wars between the Muhammadans and the Ahoms, who were supporting Bali Narayan the eastern representative of Nar Narayan’s line. The story of the Koch kings is told in greater detail in the Darrang Gazetteer, but here it would be out of place as they had little connection with Nowgong, and it is now time to turn to the Ahoms who preceded the British in the sovereignty of the district.

The Ahoms were a Shan tribe from the kingdom of Pong in the upper valley of the Irawadi, who, at the
beginning of the 13th century, crossed the Patkai and settled in the south of the territory which has since been formed into the districts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur. The country at the foot of the hills was occupied by tribes of Morans and Borahis, whom they easily subdued, and who were absorbed by inter-marriage with their conquerors. But to the west and north they were confronted by far more powerful nations. Upper Assam was ruled by the Chutiyas, a tribe of Bodo origin, who are believed to have entered the valley from the north-east, and to have conquered the Hindu Pala kings whom they found in possession of the country. On the west there was the strong Kachari kingdom with its capital at Dimapur. In the first half of the fourteenth century the Ahoms became involved in war with the Chutiyas, but their final victory did not come till 1523 A.D., when the Chutiya king was defeated and his country annexed by Suhunmung, the “Dihingia Raja,” who reigned from 1497-1539 A.D. The defeat of the Kacharis and the sack of Dimapur in 1536 has already been described in the preceding paragraphs.

The Ahoms were now supreme in Upper Assam, but were still exposed to danger from the Koch and Muhammadan powers in the west. In 1532, they defeated with great slaughter a Muhammadan invader named Turbuk on the banks of the Bhareli river, but a few years later they were conquered by the Koch king, Nar Narayan, who occupied their capital Gargaon, the modern Nazira, and exacted tribute from the Ahom prince.
At the beginning of the seventeenth century, they were again involved in war with the Muhammadans, as their king Pratap Singh declined to surrender Bali Narayan, the Koch prince, who had fled to him for protection, and who sagaciously pointed out that in their own interests it was most desirable that they should maintain a buffer state between themselves and the Muhammadans. Most of the fighting took place in Lower Assam, but in 1615 A.D., a Musalman army under Satrajit advanced as far as the Bhareli, to avenge a Muhammadan trader, who had been put to death by the Ahom king. The Muhammadans, though at first successful, were subsequently defeated both on land and water with great slaughter.

The war then dragged on in Lower Assam, but in 1637 A.D., on the death of Bali Narayan, the Bar Nadi, which at present forms the western boundary of Darrang, was fixed as the frontier between Muhammadan and Ahom territory. In 1658, the Ahoms took advantage of the confusion that ensued on the deposition of Shah Jehan to extend their arms to the Sankosh, but three years later they were driven back by Mir Jumla, the Nawab of Dacca, who occupied Gargoan, and there concluded a treaty with the Ahom Raja Sutumla, otherwise known as Jaiyadwaj Singh. The stars in their courses fought, however, on the Ahom side. The rains set in with a severity exceptional even in that rainy land, the country was converted into a swamp, and disease made havoc of the Muhammadans crowded together in their water-logged camp.
An interesting account of this invasion has been given by the Muhammadan historians. The Assamese occupied a strong fort at Kajali, which was situated near the western mouth of the river Kalang, but on the approach of the enemy, evacuated it without striking a blow in its defence. Another fort was situated at Simlagarh which seems to have been quite close to Kaliabar. The place is described as very strong and high, and the inhabitants are said to have been as numerous as ants. Two sides of the fort had battlemented walls, and guns were placed without a break along them. In front there was a moat, and pits had been dug and filled with the *panjis* or bamboo spikes which are still so generally used in Assam at the present day. In spite of its strength the fort was taken without much difficulty by the Muhammadans and the garrison fled. A great naval battle then took place in the neighbourhood of Silghat. The Assamese are said to have had seven or eight hundred ships engaged, but they were again defeated and lost half their fleet, each of the captured vessels being armed with a gun. On the conclusion of peace the Muhammadans marched back again down the valley and suffered great privations when crossing the Kajali plain, a feat which it is said had never before been attempted by any army. The difficulties of their advance must have been immense, if the Nowgong *chapari* was covered at that time with the dense growth of reeds and

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† The remains of this fort are perhaps to be found in the Kechakatigarh near Sisa.
elephant grass that are found there at the present day, and there is nothing improbable in the statement of the Muhammadan historian, that for four days the soldiers had to subsist on water. A large number of men were lost in the retreat down the valley, and by 1667 the Ahoms had again established themselves at Gauhati. A few years later this town was retaken by the Muhammadans, but it was captured again by the Ahoms during the reign of Gadadhar Singh (1681-1695) and from that time onward Goalpara remained the frontier outpost of the Muhammadan dominions. Local tradition has it that the district was colonized by this prince who transported families from Upper Assam to Nowgong.

The zenith of the Ahom power was reached in the reign of his successor Rudra Singh (1695—1714). This powerful prince waged successful wars against the Kachari Raja and the king of Jaintia, and his generals brought both of these chiefs captive to the Ahom court. The Ahoms were, however, unable to impose their yoke upon the free and savage highlanders, who rose as one man and butchered the garrisons who had been left in the chain of forts across the Jaintia Hills. Rudra Singh was the first of the Ahom kings to publicly become the disciple of Hindu priests, and after his death the power of the Ahom kingdom began steadily to decline.

His son Sib Singh was a weak prince, much under the influence of his wives, whose name has come down to posterity as excavator of the great tank near which the present station of Sibsagar (Sib's tank) stands.
The reign of his successor Pramatta Singh was uneventful, and, during the incumbency of the next prince Rajeswar Singh, the signs of the decay of the Ahom power became all too clear. The Raja of Manipur was driven from his home and applied to the Ahom king for aid. Orders were issued for the despatch of an expedition, but the nobles, to whom the command was entrusted, excused themselves on various grounds and declined the proffered honour. The army lost its way when endeavouring to cross the Patkai, a large number of men perished, and, though ultimately the Manipur Raja succeeded in regaining his dominions, it does not appear that the assistance of the Ahoms materially contributed towards his success.

Lakshmi Singh's reign was signalized by the outbreak of the Moamaria insurrection. The causes of this insurrection are not quite clear. According to the chroniclers, a certain Hathidharia Chungi with one Nahor Kachari came to offer their annual tribute of elephants to the king. The elephant which they tendered to the Borborua was a lean and sorry animal, and, as an expression of his disapproval, he cut off their hair and noses, flogged them, and drove them away. Boiling with indignation at this outrage, Nahor proceeded to the house of a Hari woman, whose daughter he espoused, and from whom he received a set of metal plates, covered with mystical incantations to confound the enemy. He then applied to the Moamaria gosain for help, which was readily afforded him, and the standard of revolt was raised. This is the account given by the Ahom
chroniclers, and it differs to some extent from the story as told by the Moamaria gosain at the present day. According to this authority, the leaders of the rebellion were two Moamarias named Nahor Khora and Ragho Neogay, who, after they had been punished for failing to deliver the elephants required, went for assistance to their gosain. The gosain himself declined to listen to their proposals, but they succeeded in winning over his son Gagini Bardekha, who gave them a weapon consecrated with the magic plates of the Kalpataru. The Kalpataru was a sacred book which Anirudha is said to have obtained from Sankar Deb, though the Ahom chroniclers contemptuously assert that it was the property of a sweeper woman.

From the very first the rebels carried all before them. The royal armies were defeated under circumstances which suggest that men and officers alike were guilty of gross incompetence and cowardice; and Lakshmi Singh was driven from his capital and captured. The insurgents then proceeded to appoint Ramakanta, the son of Nahor Khora, to be their Raja. Marauding parties harried the country on every side, and the misery of the common people was extreme. A report at last gained ground that orders had been issued for the execution of all the former officers of state, and this incited the adherents of the king to make one final effort. The signal for the attack is said to have been given by one of the wives of Lakshmi Singh. Ragho, who was one of the most influential men amongst the Moamarias, had forcibly taken her to wife, and, as he
was bending down at the bihu to offer his largess to a dancing boy, she cut him down with a sword. On the death of their leader, the rebel forces were surprised and scattered, and a pitiless vengeance taken that spared neither age nor sex.* The house of the Moamaria mahunt was surrounded, and almost the whole of his family was killed before his eyes, while all the officers appointed by the Moamarias were seized and beaten to death. The wives of the rebel prince were treated with savage cruelty. One of them was flogged to death, while two others had their ears and noses cut off and their eyes put out.

In 1780, Lakshmi Singh died, and was succeeded by his son Gaurinath, in whose reign the Moamaria insurrection broke out anew, and with increased violence. At first, the king's troops met with some measure of success, and orders were issued outlawing the rebels and authorizing any person to kill any Moamaria he might meet, regardless of time, place, sex, or age. Such orders seem to have been only too well adapted to the temper of the people, and, according to the Ahom chronicler, "the villagers thereupon massacred the Moamarias with their wives and children without mercy." The rebels in their turn were not slow to make reprisals; they plundered the country on every side, and "the burning villages appeared like a wall of fire." The ordinary operations of agriculture were suspended, no harvests could be raised, and famine killed those whom

* The Moamarias say that 790,000 members of their sect were killed, which is no doubt an oriental exaggeration.
the sword had spared. "The price of a katha of rice rose to one gold mohur, and men starved in crowds under the trees forsaking their wives and children." The highest Hindu castes are said to have eaten the flesh of cows, and dogs and jackals were devoured by the common people.

In 1786, the rebels under Bharat Singh inflicted a decisive defeat upon the royal troops, and took Rangpur, the capital, by storm. The king fled to Gauhati, and in his terror left even his wives behind him. His generals remained behind in Upper Assam and carried on the contest with varying success. Troops were despatched to their assistance from Manipur but most of them were ambushed and cut up, and the survivors had no heart to carry on the struggle. The desolation of the country is thus described by the Ahom chronicler. "The Mataks harried the temples and the idols of the gods, and put to death all the sons and daughters of our people. For a great length of time our countrymen had no home, some took shelter in Bengal, some in Burma, some in the Dafla Hills, and others in the fort of the Buragohain who was fighting with the Mataks for years and months together." Bharat Singh ruled at Rangpur for upwards of six years and coins are extant which bear his name; but in 1792 a small British force was sent to the assistance of the Ahom king under the command of Captain Welsh. Gauhati, which had been captured by a mob of Doms under a Bairagi, was re-taken, Krishna Narayan, the rebellious Raja of Mangaldai, was subdued, and in March 1794 Rangpur was re-occupied after a decisive
victory over the insurgents. Captain Welsh was then recalled, but the Ahom king was able to keep his enemies in check by the help of sepoys trained on the English system.

A few months after the departure of Captain Welsh, Gaurinath died and was succeeded by Kamaleswar Singh. The country was still in a state of great disorder. The Daffas, not content with harrying the villages on the north bank, crossed the Brahmaputra and attacked the royal troops near Silghat, but were repulsed with considerable loss. Even Europeans were not safe, and a Mr. Raush,* a merchant of Goalpara, who had extended his business operations to Darrang, was robbed and murdered by "naked Bengalis." These freebooters then occupied North Gauhati, but when they attempted to make good their position on the south bank, they were defeated with heavy loss by the royal troops near Pandu-ghat. The Daffas again harried the Darrang district, and even enlisted Bengali sepoys in their service, but were ultimately conquered and dispersed. Victories were also obtained over the Moamarias and the Khamtis at the eastern end of the valley.

In 1809, Kamaleswar Singh was succeeded by his brother Chandra Kanta Singh. The Bor Phukan or viceroy of Gauhati incurred the suspicion of the Buragohain or prime minister and fled to Calcutta and

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* This Mr. Raush was the first European to interfere in the affairs of Assam. He sent 700 burkandasses to Gaurinath's assistance, but they were cut up to a man. A mass of masonry, the size of a small cottage, covers the remains of Mr. Raush's infant children at Goalpara.
thence to Burma. At the beginning of 1816, a Burmese army crossed the Patkai and reinstated the Bor Phukan; but shortly after their withdrawal Chandra Kanta was deposed, and Purandar Singh appointed in his stead. The banished monarch appealed to the Burmese, who, in 1818, returned with a large force and replaced him on the throne.

They soon, however, made it clear that they intended to retain their hold upon Assam, and in 1820 Chandra Kanta fled to Goalpara, and from British territory began a series of abortive attempts to recover his lost kingdom. The Burmese were guilty of gross atrocities during their occupation of the country, the villages were plundered and burnt, and the people were compelled to seek shelter in the jungle. Such was their terror of the Burmese that it is said that parents would kill a crying child if it could not easily be pacified. Women who fell into their hands were violated with every circumstance of brutality, and the misery of the unfortunate Assames was extreme. Fifty men were decapitated on the banks of the Kalang river, in revenge for the opposition offered to the Burmese army before Gauhati, and upwards of two hundred persons of both sexes and all ages were imprisoned in a grass and bamboo shed and burned alive. Fortunately for them, causes of quarrel had by this time arisen between the British and the Burmese. In 1824, war was declared by the British Government, and a force was sent up the valley of the Brahmaputra. The Burmese evacuated Gauhati without striking a blow, and such fighting as
there was took place in the districts of Sibsagar and Nowgong. Rangpur was occupied in 1825, and in the following year, by the treaty of Yandaboo, Assam was ceded to the East India Company.

The above is but a brief account of the rise and fall of the Ahoms, but their history is more intimately connected with the Sibsagar district. It now remains to consider what is known of their social institutions, and the conditions under which those subject to them passed their lives.*

The most striking feature in the economy of the Ahom state, and one which, (to judge from their conduct since they came under our rule) must have been extremely repugnant to the people, was the system of enforced compulsory labour. The lower orders were divided up into groups of three or four called *gots*, each individual being styled a *powa paik*. Over every twenty *gots* was placed an officer called *bara*, over every five *baras* a *saikia*, and over every ten *saikias* a *hazarika*. In theory one *paik* from each *got* was always employed on duty with the state, and, while so engaged, was supported by the other members. The Raja and his ministers had thus at their disposal a vast army of labourers to whom they paid no wages, and for whose maintenance they did not even have to make provision. It was this system which enabled the Ahom Rajas to construct the enormous tanks and great embankments,

*This account of the social life and manners and customs of the Ahoms is principally based on old Ahom chronicles, translations of which are to be found in the office of the Superintendent of Ethnography.*
which remain to excite the envy of a generation, which has been compelled to import from other parts of India almost all the labour required for the development of the Province and its industries. Many of the works constructed were of undoubted utility, but many, on the other hand, were chiefly intended for the glorification of their designers. Few objects are more worthy of the attention of an enlightened government than the supply of wholesome drinking water to the people. But the huge reservoirs constructed by the Ahom kings, were out of all proportion to the population which could by any possibility have made use of them, while the close proximity in which these enormous tanks are placed is ample evidence that practical utility was not, the object of their construction. On the other hand, embankments which were thrown up along the sides of some of the rivers near the capital, protected land which has become unculturable since they have fallen into disrepair. Embankments of this nature were constructed along the left bank of the Brahmaputra from Silghat to Kajalimukh, along the south bank of the Rupahi, and along the west bank of the Jamuna, and must have proved of the greatest value to the villagers. The duty of providing the various articles required for the use of the king and the nobility was assigned to different groups, which were gradually beginning to assume the form of functional castes. The rapidity with which these groups abandoned their special occupations, as soon as the pressure of necessity was removed, is a clear indication of the reluctance with
which they must have undertaken the duties entrusted to them.*

But though the common people seem to have been compelled to supply an unnecessary amount of labour in times of peace, it was when war was declared that their sufferings were most pronounced. Certain clans of paiks were called out, and called out, it would seem, in numbers that were in excess of the actual requirements of the case; an error which entails the most disastrous consequences when the campaign is carried on in a country where supplies are scarce and communications difficult.

According to the Ahom chronicler, nearly 40,000 troops were despatched during the reign of Rajeswar Singh to reinstate the Manipuri Raja on the gadī. Their guides, however, failed them; they lost their way in the Naga Hills, and about two-thirds of the soldiers perished, the mortality being chiefly due to famine and disease. The military dispositions even of Rudra Singh, one of their greatest princes, suggest a want of due deliberation in design, and a feebleness and lack of method in execution. In his expeditions against the Kachari and Jaintia Rajas, the Ahoms lost 3,243 persons, and the practical results obtained seem to have been insignificant. The descriptions of the campaigns against the Moa-

* The system of enforced labour was no doubt unpopular, but it had much to recommend it. It taxed the people in the one commodity of which they had enough and to spare, i.e., labour. It also developed them on the industrial side, and the material comfort of the Assamese would possibly have been greater at the present day if they had not all of them been allowed to devote themselves exclusively to agriculture.
marias, given by the Ahom chroniclers, clearly show that the generals were often guilty of incompetence and cowardice, while the rank and file do not seem to have fully realized the dangers that beset a defeated army. Conditions such as these must of necessity have been disastrous to the private soldier.

The Muhammadan historians of the invasion of Mir Jumla give, however, a more favourable account of the Ahom military dispositions.* Their resources seem to have been considerable, and, in the course of the expedition, the Muhammadans captured 675 guns, one of which threw a ball three "mans" in weight, besides a large number of matchlocks and other field pieces. No less than 1,000 ships were taken, many of which could accommodate three or four score sailors; and in the naval engagement which took place above Silghat in March 1662 A.D., the Assamese are said to have brought seven or eight hundred ships into action. The Ahoms are described as strongly built, quarrelsome, blood-thirsty, and courageous, but at the same time merciless, mean, and treacherous. They were more than equal to the Muhammadans in a foot encounter, but were much afraid of cavalry. This corps d’élite did not, however, exceed some 20,000 men, and the ordinary villagers, who were pressed into the service, were ready to fling away their arms and take to flight at the slightest provocation.

Another factor, which cannot but have re-acted unfavourably upon the common people, was the uncertainty of Government and arbitrariness of character. Uncertainty

* An interesting account of this invasion will be found in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Volume XLI, Part 1, pages 49—100.
of tenure, under which both the ministers and king held office. A perusal of the Ahom chronicles leaves the reader with the impression that the ministers were continually being deprived of their portfolios, and not unfrequently of life itself. Hardly less precarious was the position of the king, and in the short space of 33 years, between 1648 and 1681, no less than two monarchs were deposed, and seven came to a violent end. Good government, as we understand the term, must have been impossible under such conditions, and we may be sure that the people suffered from this constant change of rulers. Buchanan Hamilton, writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, states that the administration of justice under Ahom rule was fairly liberal. Important trials were conducted in open court, the opinion of assessors was consulted, the evidence was recorded, and capital punishment was only inflicted under a written warrant from the king. It is true, no doubt, that few persons possessed the power of imposing the death sentence. But they were allowed to inflict punishments which the victim could hardly be expected to survive, and his position was not unlike that of the heretic delivered by the inquisition to the civil arm, with the request that "blood may not be shed."

Abundant evidence is available in the Ahom chronicles to show the arbitrary way in which the royal authority was exercised. The following instances are quoted from the reign of Pratap Singh, 1611—1649 A.D. A Kataki, or envoy charged with diplomatic relations with foreign powers, asked the Muhammadan commander
on his frontier to supply him with two jnrs. His conduct was reported to the king, who immediately ordered him to be put to death. Another Kataki reported that he had heard from a down-country man that a Muhammadan force was advancing up the valley. The king enquired of the Kataki responsible for watching the movements of the enemy, whether this information was correct. This man declared that he was unable to obtain any confirmation of the rumour, whereupon the first Kataki was executed for presuming to meddle in matters with which he had no concern—a proceeding which seems to have been hardly calculated to ensure the supply of timely and accurate information. Three merchants then endeavoured to establish friendly relations between the Nawab of Dacca and the Ahom king. The latter prince took umbrage at such unwarrantable interference in affairs of state, and ordered the merchants to be put to death. It subsequently appeared that the facts had not been correctly represented, and the Bor Phukan and two other men responsible were promptly killed. A few years later, the king transported a large number of persons from the north to the south bank of the Brahmaputra, warning them that any one who attempted to re-visit his former home would suffer the penalty of death with all his family "even to the child in the womb." Five hundred men attempted to return as they wished, the chronicler informs us, to rear a brood of silkworms. The king had them arrested, and 300 were put to death, the remainder escaping in the darkness of the night.
The following incident that occurred in the reign of Lakshmi Singh (1769—1780) is typical of the uncertainties of the time. One Ramnath Bhorali Borua, an officer of state, had the presumption to appear mounted in the presence of his official superior the Borborua. A complaint was promptly laid before the king, who directed that both Ramnath and his brother should be deprived of sight. The injured man was not, however, destitute of friends, and came with his complaint to the Kalita Phukan, who had his private reasons for desiring the downfall of the Borborua. The Phukan went to the king, poisoned his mind against his minister with the suggestion that a conspiracy was on foot, a suggestion which in those days must always have seemed plausible enough, and, in a short time, the heads of the haughty Borborua, his two uncles and his brother, were rolling in the dust. It is needless to multiply instances of the savage violence of the times, but the different forms of punishment in vogue call for some remark. Where life was spared, the ears, nose, and hair were cut off, the eyes put out, or the knee pans torn from the legs, the last named penalty generally proving fatal. Persons sentenced to death were hung, impaled, hewn in pieces, crushed between two wooden cylinders like sugarcane in a mill, sawn asunder, burnt alive, fried in oil, or, if the element of indignity was desired, shorn of their hands and feet and placed in holes, which were then utilized as latrines.

In the seventeenth century, it was no uncommon thing to compel conspirators to eat their own flesh, and more
than one case is quoted, in which the father was forced to eat the liver of his son, a meal that was usually his last in this world. Punishment too was not restricted to the actual offender, but his wretched wife was liable to be handed over to the embraces of a Hari. Methods such as these could hardly fail to have a terrifying effect on much more hardened criminals than the Assamese.

The Ahoms, even after they became a powerful nation, seem to have adhered to a simple style of life, in which there was little of extravagance or luxury. They have left few masonry memorials of their rule; the Raja's palace is almost invariably referred to as "a planked house," and, according to Buchanan Hamilton, the king alone was allowed to erect an edifice of brick. Shoes might not be worn except by the special license of the king, bedsteads and curtains were only to be found in the houses of the rich, and all but the most important visitors to a noble's house sat on the bare ground. The account given of the Raja's palace at Gargaon by the historian of Mir Jumla's invasion is pitched in a more exalted key. Twelve thousand workmen had been engaged on its construction for a year, and the audience hall was 120 cubits long by 30 wide. "The ornaments and curiosities with which the whole woodwork of the house was filled defy all description: nowhere in the whole inhabited world would you find a house equal to it in strength, ornamentation, and pictures." The absence of all reference to these wonders in the Ahom histories suggests, however, than the Muhammadans were anxious to magnify the power and majesty of the prince they had subdued.
The native chroniclers are naturally most concerned with the wars and religious festivals, which bulked so largely in the eyes of the historians of the day, and with the rise and fall of successive families of ministers. It is only incidentally that light is thrown on the social conditions of the people. The kings seem to have indulged in frequent tours about their territories, the itinerary usually followed being Rangpur, Sonarinagar, Tengabari, Dergaon, Jaliarang, Bornagar, Bishnath, and Kaliabar. They were fond of fishing and shooting, and fully appreciated the excitement to be obtained from the hunting of wild elephants. On the occasion of coronations and royal weddings, a week was generally devoted to the festivities, which seem, however, to have consisted for the most part of prolonged feasts, accompanied by much unmelodious music. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, acrobats and jugglers were imported from Bengal, who amused their royal patrons with tricks which are still shown to the tourist on the P. & O. Kamaleswar Singh visited in state the two principal sattras of Auniati and Dakhinpat, and was entertained with all his retinue by the gosains. The chronicler quaintly tells us that the lunch at Dakhinpat gave greater satisfaction than the one at Auniati; but does not say whether this was due to the superior skill of the Dakhinpatia cook, or to the greater beauty of the sattra precincts.

The first Hindus to influence the Ahom kings were Saktists, and Pratap Singh (1611—1649) persecuted the Vaishnavites, one of whose leaders had converted his son
to Hinduism. The disciples of the gosains were seized, human ordure was placed on their foreheads, and they were degraded to the sweeper caste. To be found in the possession of religious books meant death, not only to the actual owner, but to every member of his family. Even Pratap Singh's spiritual pastors were not spared, and he denounced the new religion which, in spite of the adherence of the Raja, had not been able to save from death his own beloved son. He then assembled 700 Brahmans, ostensibly to perform a festival, and, as a punishment for their incompetency, degraded them to the status of paiks. These persecutions were continued by Gadadhar Singh, who, in 1692, plundered the treasure houses of the Vaishnavite gosains, and cast the idols into the water. No respect was shown even to the sacred head of the Auniati sattra, and he was driven from his home to Tejikhat. He fared, however, better than the gosain of Dakhinpat, who had his eyes put out and his nose cut off while many Hindu priests were put to death. A policy of extermination seems in fact to have been inaugurated, and, according to one chronicler, orders were issued for the destruction of every Hindu child regardless of sex and age. The king had large quantities of pork, beef, and fowls, cooked by men of the Dom caste, and compelled Kewats, Koches, Doms, and Haris to partake of their unholy food.

This policy of oppression was reversed during the reign of Rudra Singh, his son, who was publicly admitted as a disciple of the Auniati gosain; and, from this time forward, the influence of the priests seems to have increased.
During the Moamaria insurrection the religious orders again fell upon evil times. The rebel king confined the persons of the four principal gosains, and extorted Rs. 8,000 each from Auniati and Dakhinpat, and Rs. 4,000 each from Garamur and Kamalabari. Religion was degraded by the promulgation of an order that any person could be initiated on payment of a betel nut, and the common people availed themselves in crowds of this indulgence. Subsequently in the reign of Gaurinath Singh the Moamarias attacked the Garamur sattra, burned it to the ground, slew a large number of the disciples and nearly killed the gosain himself. His successor, Kamaleswar Singh, (1795-1809) found himself unable to pay the sepoys whose services were indispensable for the maintenance of some sort of order in the kingdom. Following the example of other monarchs, he called upon the church to supply the funds for the support of the temporal power. Contributions were levied on all the mahunts and the demands of the soldiers were satisfied.

But, though converted to Hinduism, the Ahoms found the restrictions of their new religion irksome; and their gosains, with the tact which they display towards their converts of the present day, allowed their new disciples a considerable degree of latitude. Rudra Singh, though he had been publicly admitted to the church by the Auniati gosain, feasted his followers on buffaloes and pigs on the occasion of his father's funeral; while not only buffaloes but even cows found a place in the menu of his coronation banquet. At the time of the first
Moamaria insurrection, the rebel chief made overtures to Lakshmi Singh, and offered him, apparently in good faith, a pig for supper. A present such as this clearly shows that even towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Hinduism of the Ahom kings was one of the most liberal variants of that catholic creed. Before taking any decisive step, it was the practice to refer, not only to the Brahmans and Ganaks, but also to the old Ahom priests the Deodhais and Bailongs. These venerable men were required to consult the omens, by studying the way in which a dying fowl crossed its legs—a system of divination which is in vogue amongst many of the hill tribes of Assam to the present day. The restrictions of caste were evidently somewhat lax, as we hear that the Moamaria mahunt had an intrigue with a Hari woman; while at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the viceroy of Gauhati took a fisher girl for his mistress, a breach of the covenances for which, it should be added, he was deposed.

The influence of the Muhammadans in Assam Proper was so slight that the low view they professed to take of the other sex had little or no effect upon the general population. The Ahoms, like their Burmese ancestors, held their women folk in honour, and, even at the present day, the purdah and all that it implies, is almost unknown in the country inhabited by the Assamese. The Ahom princesses seem to have taken a prominent part on ceremonial occasions, and not unfrequently exercised considerable influence on affairs of state. In the middle of the seventeenth century, two of the queens
almost usurped the reins of government, and, according to the Ahom chronicler, "their words were law." When called to account by the successor of their husband, they proudly stated that they had been of great service to the king, at a time when he was ignorant of the way in which he should behave, whether when "eating, drinking, sitting, sleeping, or at council." Sib Singh (1714—1744) is said to have abdicated in favour of his queens, hoping thereby to defeat a prophecy which declared that he would be deposed; and coins have been found bearing the names of four of these princesses. The mother of Lakshmi Singh dug a tank, and Gaurinath entrusted to his stepmother the control of the Khangia mel, and consulted with his mother about affairs of state. It was not, however, only the princesses of royal blood who concerned themselves with public matters. At the time of the Moamaria insurrection, one Luki Rani was sent against the rebels; and the victory over Turbuk in 1532 is partly ascribed to the courageous action of the widow of the Buragohain, who had been killed in a previous engagement by the Muhammadans. Desperate at the loss of her husband, she put on armour and rode into the ranks of the enemy to avenge his death. No mercy was shown her and she fell, pierced with spears; but her example emboldened the Ahoms, who at once advanced to the attack and defeated the Musalmans with great slaughter.

In estimating the effects of British rule, it is necessary to form a clear idea of the state of the Province at the time when it passed into our possession, and first it must
be pointed out that the British did not conquer Assam in the sense in which that word is usually employed. The native system of government had completely broken down, the valley was in the hands of cruel and barbarous foreigners, and it was not as conquerors but as protectors and avengers that the English came. They were certainly not inspired by any lust for land. For some time after the expulsion of the Burmese, the East India Company were doubtful whether they would retain their latest acquisition, and an attempt was made to administer the upper portion of the valley through a descendant of the Ahom kings.

The condition in which we found the country was lamentable in the extreme. For fully fifty years, the Province had been given over to desolation and anarchy. Life, property, honour were no longer safe, and the people in their misery had even abandoned the cultivation of the soil, on which they depended for their very livelihood. Bands of pirates used to raid up the valleys of the Dhansiri and Kakadanga, and return with their boats laden with booty, leaving ruin, death, and desolation in their wake. The hill tribes were no longer kept in order, and the Dasals descended and harried the submontane tracts, and even extended their depredations to the south of the Brahmaputra. The treatment meted out to the unfortunate villagers, can be judged from the protest made by the hillmen to Rajeswar Singh, shortly before the collapse of the Ahom Government, when they begged him "not to pull out the bones from the mouth of dogs." Buchanan Hamilton, writing in
1809 A. D., states that north of the Brahmaputra 
"there is no form of justice. Each power sends a force 
which takes as much as possible from the cultivator."

The memories of this miserable time survived long 
after it had passed away. In 1853, an Assamese gentle 
man, Srijut Ananda Ram Dhekiyal Phukan, wrote as fol-
lows to Mr. Moffatt Mills:—"Our countrymen hailed 
the day on which British supremacy was proclaimed in 
the Province of Assam, and entertained sanguine expecta-
tions of peace and happiness from the rule of Britain. 
For several years antecedent to the annexation, the Pro-
vince groaned under the oppression and lawless tyranny 
of the Burmese, whose barbarous and inhuman policy 
depopulated the country, and destroyed more than one 
half of the population, which had already been thinned 
by intestine commotions and repeated civil wars. We 
cannot but acknowledge, with feelings of gratitude, that 
the expectations which the Assamese had formed of the 
happy and beneficial results of the Government of 
England, have, in a great measure, been fulfilled; and 
the people of Assam have now acquired a degree of 
confidence in the safety of their lives and property, which 
they never had the happiness of feeling for ages past."

Whatever errors have been committed by the British 
Government, and it is too much to hope that no mistakes 
of policy have been made during an administration of 
nearly eighty years, there can be no question that the 
introduction of a settled form of government has been 
of the greatest benefit to the immense mass of the 
people to whom it has been extended.
On passing into our hands Nowgong was first administered with Kamrup and Darrang as the Lower Assam division, but in 1833, it was formed into a separate district. The head-quarters were established at Puranigudam, but it was found that there was not enough high land there for a civil station, and in 1835 they were transferred to Rangagara. This place proved to be unhealthy and was not sufficiently central, and in 1839 the Magistrate's Court was moved to Nowgong, where it has since remained. The boundaries of the district have also undergone considerable change. The Dhansiri was originally selected as the eastern frontier, and Nowgong included the country inhabited by the Mikirs and a considerable portion of the North Cachar and Naga Hills. In 1853, North Cachar was formed into a separate subdivision, and in the following year Tula Ram's* territory was added to this charge. In 1867, the Naga Hills and a large part of the Mikir Hills were erected into a separate district, the subdivision of North Cachar was abolished, and a considerable portion of the territory of which it was composed was placed under the management of the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar. In 1898, a large part of the Mikir Hills was retransferred to Nowgong and the district took its present form.

Few events of historical interest have occurred in Nowgong during the time that it has been administered as a British district. In 1835, the revenue amounted

* For an account of Tula Ram and his small principality, see District Gazetteer of Cachar.
to Rs. 60,475 and the expenditure to Rs. 35,622. Ten years later the revenue had risen to Rs. 131,000, but then ensued a period of complete stagnation, and in 1853 it was less than it was in 1845. The causes of this stagnation were said to be "frequent high inundations, repeated visitations of cholera and small pox carrying off thousands, and the licentious habits of the people." The term "licentious habits" apparently refers to the use of opium, this being a drug to which the inhabitants of Nowgong have always been addicted, as the people could hardly be described as licentious in the sense in which that word is usually employed. The appalling results of kalā-azar are described in the following chapter, but it is significant to find that the local officers even in the fifties were far from hopeful with regard to the future of the Assamese. In 1854, Major Butler wrote as follows, "In no district in Assam are the people in more prosperous circumstances than in Nowgong. Rice, their common food, is cheap and abundant; numerous rivers and lakes afford a plentiful supply of fish; their gardens furnish vegetables and fruit; and the climate rendering but little clothing necessary, with a trifling revenue to pay, they have every reason to be satisfied and contented; and I believe they are grateful for the protection of the British Government. With all these advantages, however, they are a licentious and degraded race and appear degenerating rapidly. Numbers of children die annually and the period of their existence seems diminishing. Few adults attain old age, and we almost despair oft
population increasing or of their condition being ameliorated by education or the acquirement of more industrial habits." * 

The attachment of the aboriginal tribes to opium led to a serious riot at Phulaguri in 1861, when the cultivation of the poppy was prohibited. *Mels* or village assemblies were held day after day to discuss the new and most obnoxious orders, and were attended by large numbers of the people. The police endeavoured to disperse these meetings, and arrest the ringleaders, but found themselves powerless in the presence of such vastly superior numbers; and on December 18th Lieutenant Singer, the Assistant Commissioner, was sent from Nowgong to enquire into the matter. This unfortunate young officer called upon the villagers to disperse, and, when they failed to do so, ordered the police to deprive them of their clubs. One of the constables was assaulted as he was endeavouring to carry out this order and Lieutenant Singer, when coming to his assistance, was felled to the ground by a blow from a thick bamboo. He was deserted by the police, who incontinently fled, though the firing of a single musket was subsequently enough to make the crowd fall back, and was afterwards cruelly murdered at the instigation of one of the ringleaders who said “the saheb did not come to redress our grievances but to put us in bonds; he is still alive, kill him.” The Deputy Commissioner on receiving news of the

* Travels and adventures in the Province of Assam by Major John Butler; London, Smith Elder and Company, 1855, p. 245.
murder sent out a few men from the detachment of twenty-four sepoys of the 2nd Assam Light Infantry who were stationed in Nowgong, but remained behind himself to protect the treasury. An application was despatched to Tezpur for re-inforcements, and Colonel Hopkinson, who happened to be there, ordered across fifty sepoys, and then proceeded by steamer to Gauhati to bring up eighty more, some of whom were landed at Tezpur. No further opposition was encountered and the Deputy Commissioner proceeded to Phulaguri and held a judicial investigation into the causes of the riot.

The whole occurrence seems to have been mismanaged, and to have been viewed by the local authorities with unnecessary alarm. The people had been irritated by the prohibition of poppy cultivation, and there were rumours of a tax on incomes and pan. Rightly or wrongly the villagers had formed the idea that they could not get a hearing from the Deputy Commissioner, and prior to Lieutenant Singer's death the mistake was made of attempting to coerce a dangerous crowd with an insufficient force. After that lamentable occurrence the authorities seem to have overestimated the gravity of the occasion, and the Commissioner describes the force of 50 sepoy marching from Laokhoa to Nowgong as protected on either flank by an impassable morass, as though they could not have easily beaten off any attack that might have been made on them by villagers armed with nothing better than bamboo clubs.
The subsequent history of Nowgong has been very uneventful, and there is no district in Assam which has been and still is so much cut off from the outside world and the hurried march of progress. The principal event of recent years has been the quiet but steady extermination of the people from *kala azar*, but this is a matter for which reference should be made to the following chapter.

The district possesses very few remains which are of any interest to the archaeologist. The temple at Kamakhya near Silghat dates from 1745, A.D. and is built of stone and brick in the usual Ahom style. On the Jugijan, in the Kapili valley, there are the ruins of a fort and of three stone temples, two of which were of considerable size and were dedicated to Siva. These temples were built of large blocks of stone ornamented with carvings and bas-reliefs. The appearance of the ruins would suggest that they were overthrown by an earthquake, but nothing definite is known about them. Reference has been already made to the remains of Jangal Balahu's fort near Raha, and there is another rampart of a similar character near the Rangagara inspection bungalow in the Samaguri tahsil. On the Chapanalla hill in Chalchali mauza there are the remains of some stone temples and old fortifications, and there is a fine tank with brick lined sides near Jiajuri. A list of temples and of other sacred places will be found in the next chapter.
## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

### AHOM KINGS.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>A.D.</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1728</td>
<td>Sukapha</td>
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<tr>
<td>1768</td>
<td>Sutempha</td>
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<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>Subinpha</td>
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<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>Sukangpha</td>
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<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>Sutupha (treacherously killed by Chutiyas at a regatta held on the Sathra river to celebrate a cessation of hostilities between the two tribes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1830-1839</td>
<td>Interregnum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Sukemthi, a weak and tyrannical prince, assassinated by his ministers</td>
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<tr>
<td>1839-1838</td>
<td>Interregnum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Sutungpha</td>
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<tr>
<td>1807</td>
<td>Sutangpha</td>
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<tr>
<td>1822</td>
<td>Subhukpha</td>
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<tr>
<td>1839</td>
<td>Sutungpha (defeats Nagas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Sutungpha (defeated by Kacharis in 1490, and murdered by a convict)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Supimpha, a cruel prince assassinated by his ministers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1467</td>
<td>Suhunmung, alias Sarga Narayan or Dihingia Baja, conquers Chutiyas and annexes their kingdom 1523. Repulses two Muhammadan invasions, the second being that under Turbuk in 1532, who was routed near the Bhereli river. Kills Kachari king and sacks Dimapur his capital in 1536. Assassinated 1539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1530</td>
<td>Sukhenmung—built Gargaon (Nalira)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1553</td>
<td>Sukampha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1611</td>
<td>Suchengpha or Pratap Singh, Assistance Bali Narayan against Muslims, besieges Hajo, but is driven back. Bar Nadi accepted as frontier between Muhammadans and Ahoms in 1537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1649</td>
<td>Surumpha, Deposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1653</td>
<td>Suchingpha, Deposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1654</td>
<td>Sutumla or Dajipadawaj Singh, Ahoms occupy Goalpara, 1658. Driven back by Mir Juma, who enters Gargaon, 1661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1663</td>
<td>Chakradwaj, Ahoms reoccupy Gauhati in 1667</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### MUHAMMADAN INVASIONS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A.D.</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1304</td>
<td>Baktiar Khilji invades Assam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1320</td>
<td>Ghiyas-ud-din-Bahadur Shah advances to Sadiya, but is defeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1356</td>
<td>Iktiyarud-din Yusak Tughhil Khan invades the Brahmaputra Valley but is ultimately defeated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1387</td>
<td>Muhammad Shah sends a force of 10,000 horsemen into Assam, all of whom perish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### KOCH KINGS.

| 1509-1534 | Viswasingh—Founds Koch kingdom, advances against Ahoms but was apparently defeated |
| 1534-1584 | Nar Narayan—conquers Ahoms and occupies Gargaon circa 1563 A.D Subdues Rajas of Cacher, Jaintia, Manipur, Tipperah and Sylhet, Kala Pahar invades Assam in 1553 and destroys temples at Kamakhya and Hajo |
| 1531-1593 | Baghu Rai obtains share of Koch kingdom east of Sankosh |
| 1614-1614 | Parikshit—builds North Gauhati, quarrels with his cousin Lakshmi Narayan, calls in Muhammadans to his aid |
| 1614-1837 | Bali Narayan—Invokes aid of Ahoms against Muhammadans. From this date the Koch kings cease to be of any political importance |
CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.—Concluded.

AHOM KINGS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. D.</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1670</td>
<td>Adyaditya Singh, assassinated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1673</td>
<td>Sukhumpha-poisoned. Musalmans reoccupy Gauhati.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1674</td>
<td>Subhang-assassinated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1674</td>
<td>Toenkungiya-assassinated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1674</td>
<td>Subhangpha-blinded and murdered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1677</td>
<td>Sudinpha-assassinated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1679</td>
<td>Sulekpha (Lora Raja) assassinated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1681</td>
<td>Gadadhar Singh—Ahoms recover possession of Gauhati.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1695</td>
<td>Rudra Singh—founds Rangpur, defeats Kachari and Jaintia Rajas, publicly adopts Hinduism as his religion. This period represents the height of the Ahom power. Dies at Gauhati.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1714</td>
<td>Sib Singh—a weak prince who resigned in favour of his wives. Excavated tank at Sibsagar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1744</td>
<td>Pramatta Singh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1751</td>
<td>Rajeswar Singh. Decline of Ahom power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1780</td>
<td>Lakshmi Singh. Out-break of Moamaria rebellion—king deposed for a time, but subsequently reinstated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>Gaurinath Singh. Driven to Gauhati by Moamarias. Reinstated by Captain Welsh in 1792, who is, however, recalled in 1794. Krishna Narayan, Darrang Raja, asserts his independence in 1792, but is defeated by Captain Welsh.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820</td>
<td>Chandra Kanta Singh—Burmese are invited into Assam by Bor Phukan. Deposed 1816.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1818</td>
<td>Purandar Singh—Burmese again enter Assam. Deposed 1818.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1818</td>
<td>Chandra Kanta Singh—Burmese decline to leave—Chandra Kanta driven from Assam in 1820.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>War declared between British and Burmese Governments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>Rangpur taken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1825</td>
<td>Treaty of Yandabo by which Assam was ceded to the East India Company.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>