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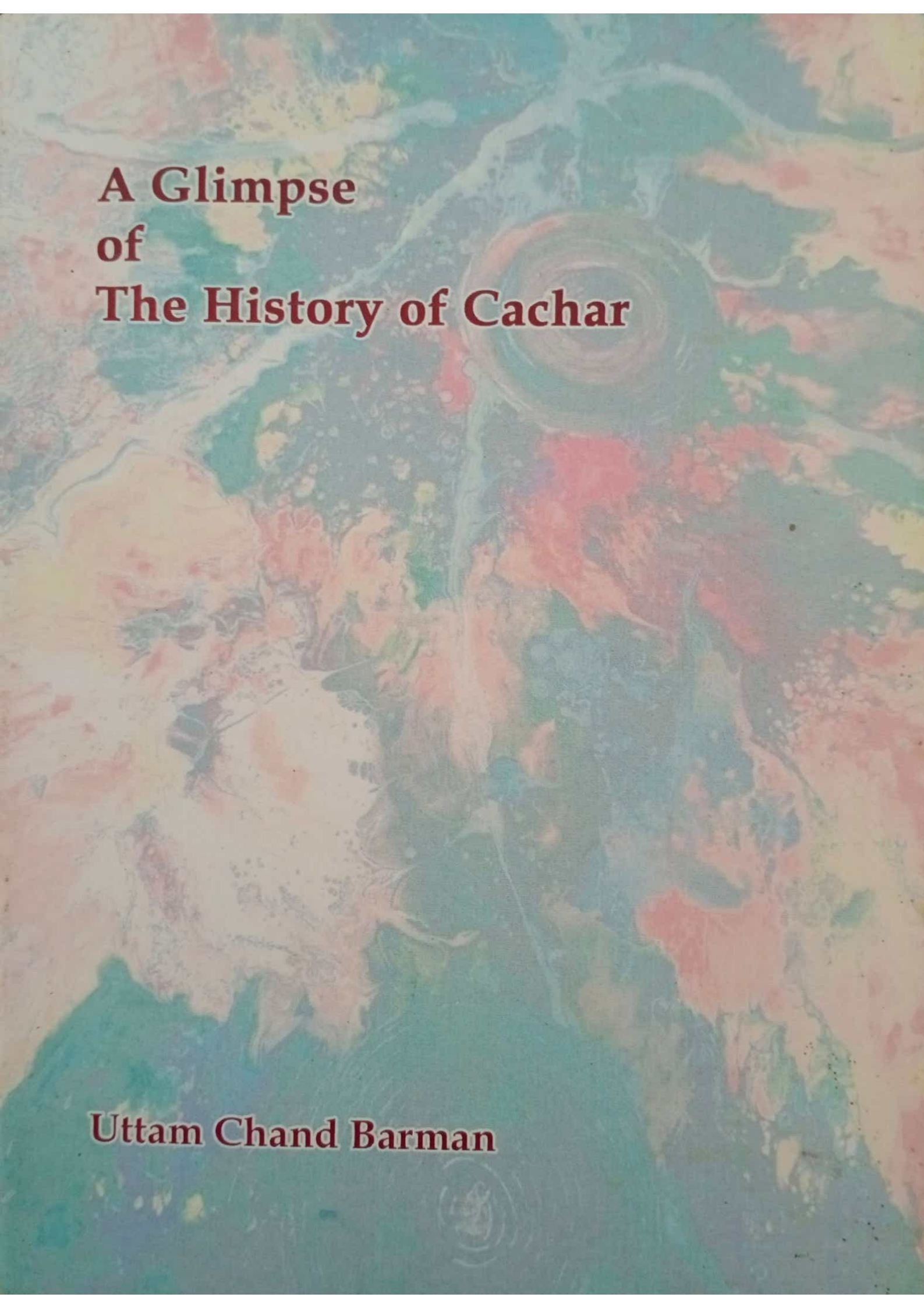
**A Glimpse
of
The History of Cachar**

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Uttam Chand Barman

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The History of Cachar
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OF
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A GLIMPSE OF
THE HISTORY OF CACHAR
(A Historical Documentation)

By Uttam Chand Barman

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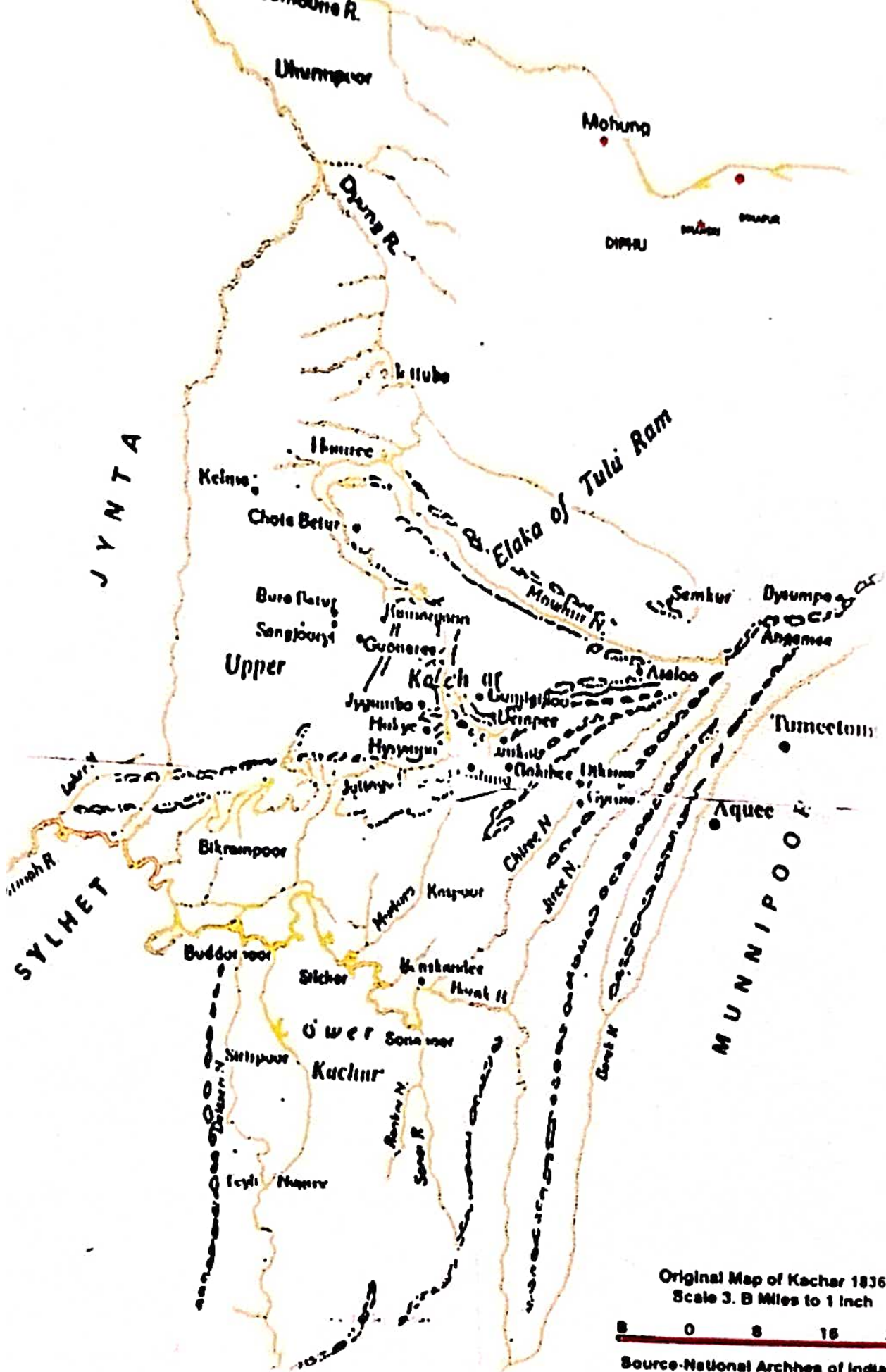
PREFACE

In my discussion in the pages of this tiny book, I sought to show the movement of the Dimasas, which started from Pragjyotispur (Capital of the ancient Dimasa Kingdom of Kamrup) and ended at Khaspur in Cachar. But strange as it may seem, this movement was truly a continuation of the journey, which the ancestors of the Dimasas (then known as Phoenicians or Panisa), once beyond the reach of human memory, took from Egypt and the Nile, (the longest river in the world, 6,695 km. long) and ended at Pragjyotispur via Harappa = dry-Land/desert kingdom in Dimasa: Hā=land, and rāoppā=dry land (one of the best and oldest seats of civilization in the world, now generally believed to be the root of the Indian culture and civilization) and Divoko=ocean kingdom in Dimasa : Di = water and voko = store- house i.e. Sāgar-rājyo (as opposed to Harappa) in what is now the land of Bengal on the shore of the Bay of Bengal. Thus, the root of their journey went down a long way into the ancient soil of Africa. And very agreeably, most of the paleo-anthropologists now say that Africa is the birthplace of humankind, where the human ancestors evolved and spread over the whole world.

Cachar was ostensibly the last destination. It formed part of the kingdom of Kamrup since time immemorial. As narrated in the Ramayana, the mountain of Pragjyotisa was very wide-spread; *Yojanāni chatusasthirvarahi nāma parvata=64 yojanas* or approximately 500 miles in extent (Kishkindhya Kanda). These epic words are very definite in their meaning that the land of Cachar was well within the sway of the mountain of Pragjyotisa voraha where grew large banyan trees abounded with countless beasts and birds. There can be no reason why this epic account should not be believed to be true standing fast and sure-footed for ever and ever. This epic account harbours vital import hidden in its passage unreachable by the outlandish writers of history. Perhaps, I am quite within the mark to say that these writers were also lacking in inquisitiveness for paying visits to the Dimasas who alone lived longer life and held better experience in men and matters of the country capable of explaining them more accurately to others, but which the outlandish writers neglected to receive. So, it is that the name of the ancient kingdom of *Kamru* has become *Kamarupa* to them through the creation of a strongly coloured legend of *Kamadev* in the Kalika Purana and the countless river-names which were given by the Dimasas in their own words such as Dihong, Dibang, Disang, Dihing, Digaru, Dikhow, Dimow, Dibru, Diphu, Disu (now Jaldhaka in Bangladesh), Tirap, Tisa, Tihu, Tiru, Tista and so on have been wrongly identified by them as Bodo words misleading the people to believe that the Bodo was the principal language of the land when it was not at all in reality. These outlandish writers,

out of their outlandish notion, misinterpreted and misapplied things consigning them to the realm of a fairy tale and to suit their own fancies. So, to many of them, Dimapur was the first capital of the Dimasas, Maibang the second and Khaspur the third or the last, which are apparently nothing but clever counterfeits unreliable for historical purposes. But yet, to our dismay, these counterfeits are passing popularly for genuine. Will the history repeat itself?

Uttam Chand Barman



Original Map of Kachar 1836
Scale 3.8 Miles to 1 Inch



Source-National Archives of India
obtained through Dr. S. K. Ghosh

A GLIMPSE OF THE HISTORY OF CACHAR

Introduction: -

Cachar: - The land of Cachar (Old) was a part of the ancient kingdom of Kamrup. This is very evident from the account of the Great Epic Ramayana: -

*Yojanani chatusasthirvarahi nama parvata
suvarnashringa sumahanagadhe Varunalaye Tatra
Pragjyotising nama jatarupamayang puram.*

[Herein existed above the vast and fathomless abode of Varuna (i.e. sea), a mountain named Varaha, 64 yojana (= 500 miles approximately) wide, having golden peaks and upon this mountain was situated a golden city named Pragjyotisa].

- Kishkindhya Kanda

Further, according to the account of Hiuen Tsang, the ancient kingdom of Kamrup was about 10,000 li (nearly 1700 miles) in circuit. R.C. Dutta also said: To the east and beyond a great river, was a powerful kingdom of Kamrup 2000 miles in circuit (Dutta's Civilization in Ancient India).

MOVEMENTS

Names of Capitals with names of kingdoms where the Dimasas ruled

1. Name of kingdom - Kamrup
-DO- capital - Pragjyotispur
Date - ? to 835 A.D.
Name of the last king- Harjra Barman
2. Name of kingdom - Kamrup
-DO- capital - Haruppeswara (modern Tezpur)
Date - 835 A.D. to mid 10th century
Name of the last king- Koundilyanarayana
3. Name of kingdom - Dimabong Halali
-DO- capital - Koundilyanagar (modern Sadia)
Date - Upto 1070 A.D.
Name of the last king- Meghabalnarayana
4. Name of kingdom - Herambo Rajya
-DO- capital - Dimapur
Date - 1070 - 1540 A.D.
Name of the last king- Harameswar alias Keshab
5. Name of kingdom - Herambo Rajya
-DO- capital - Maibang
Date - 1540 - 1701 A.D.
Name of the last king- Tamradhwaja
6. Name of kingdom - Herambo Rajya
-DO- capital - Wa-bari (temporary),
near Khaspur.
Date - 1701 - 1740 A.D.
Name of the last king- Ramachandranarayana
7. Name of kingdom - Herambo Rajya
-DO- capital - Khaspur
Date - 1740 to 1832 A.D.
Name of the last king- Gobindachandranarayana

Cachar/ Herambo Kingdom -

The Kingdom of the Dimasas from Dimapur upto the annexation by the British (1070 - 1832 A.D.) was known as Herambo Rajya, because the kings were scion of king Herambo of the epic lore.

History - It is an epical truth that Bhima, the second Pandava married Hirimba, sister of Herambo of Herambovana. A son named Ghatotkacha was born to them. Ghatotkacha married Kumkudumdi, daughter of king Bhagadatta of Pragjyotispur (Capital of ancient Kamrup). Two sons named Barbarik and Saseng were born to them.

In the battle of Kurukshetra, Ghatotkacha fell victim to the conspiratorial design planted by Shrikrishna and was killed by the irresistible stroke of the dreadful missile of Karna. Not only so, Barbarik, Ghatotkacha's elder son too was beguiled by Shri Krishna and slain with great tact.

When his father and elder brother were thus killed through vile means, Saseng, the younger prince, became apprehensive of fatal misfortune to befall him. So, he escaped to Pragjyotispur, the seat of the Raj of his grandfather (his mother's father), followed by a large body of his subjects and retinue. The Dimasas were a clannish people. So, Saseng was given a new and distinctive clan named Saseng (later distorted to Haseng) after his name. The Herambo kings of the Herambo Kingdom, onward from Dimapur, used to describe themselves as Hasengsa (Sasengsa), meaning the scion

of Saseng connecting themselves to Pandu, the great king of ancient India. Indeed kings Krishnachandranarayana and Gobindachandranarayana described themselves as *Panduvamsaja*.

Herambo Kingdom - exploited

After the assassination of Raja Gobindachandranarayana on the 24th of April, 1830 A.D., the National Assembly, which was the Apex and Permanent Body, represented by the Clan-heads of the forty Sengfongs, in exercise of its constitutional power, appointed General Tularam, a blood royal and cousin of Gobindachandranarayana, as the new king of the Herambo kingdom. Thus, Tularam became the king under the established Law of the land.

General Tularam, who heretofore held charge of the Northern Division comprising the Dhansiri valley and the Southern Central Brahmaputra valley upto Kajalimukh bordering the Koch Kingdom having headquarters at Rajapathar, proceeded towards Khaspur to ascend the throne. But the British raised a strong blockade opposing his advance. As a result, he failed to ascend the throne and had to remain content with the Northern Division (Upper Cachar) over which he ruled independently.

Annexation of Southern Division.

Under their Constitutional law, the Dimasa kingship was a democratic institution. It was the National

A Glimpse of the History of Cachar

Assembly of Clan-heads which enjoyed prerogative to make and unmake a king. The kingship could not be held by the right of inheritance. But on the contrary, the Governor - General in Council Lord William Bentinck annexed the Southern Division (Barak Valley and North Cachar Hills up to river Mahur on the north) by a proclamation on the 14th of August, 1832 A.D. on the plea of absence of successor as king Gobindachandranarayana died childless. More strangely still, he lied more when he proclaimed adding that the annexation was made *in compliance with the frequent and earnestly expressed wishes of the people*. This is a great lie, a clever fake and a cooked up swindle. Could the child of the King alone enjoy the right of succession? Why did the British close their eyes to Chandrakala, the Queen consort of the king? And why did they blockade the path of Tularam?

Colonial administration established

Captain T. Fisher, an army officer, then employed at Cherrapunji, was gazetted to the first post of the Superintendent. He took charge of the territory of the Southern Division on June 30, 1830 A.D. unlawfully before the annexation regularized on August 14, 1832. He was given the power of a Collector and Magistrate with headquarters at Cherapunji. In 1833 A.D., the headquarters was shifted to Dudhpatil on the bank of river Barak and then to Janiganj at Silchar. Janiganj was already a developed Dimasa village having a market square and a temple of goddess Kali established by king Lakshimchandranarayana in 1772 A.D. Mr. Fisher died

while in service. On his death, the post of the Superintendent was held respectively by: -

Mr. I. G. Burns

Mr. E.G. Lyons

Mr. P.G. Pearsons and some others.

The post of the Superintendent was redesignated as Deputy Commissioner and Mr. R. Stuart was the first Deputy Commissioner of Cachar.

The kings of Northern Division / Upper Cachar

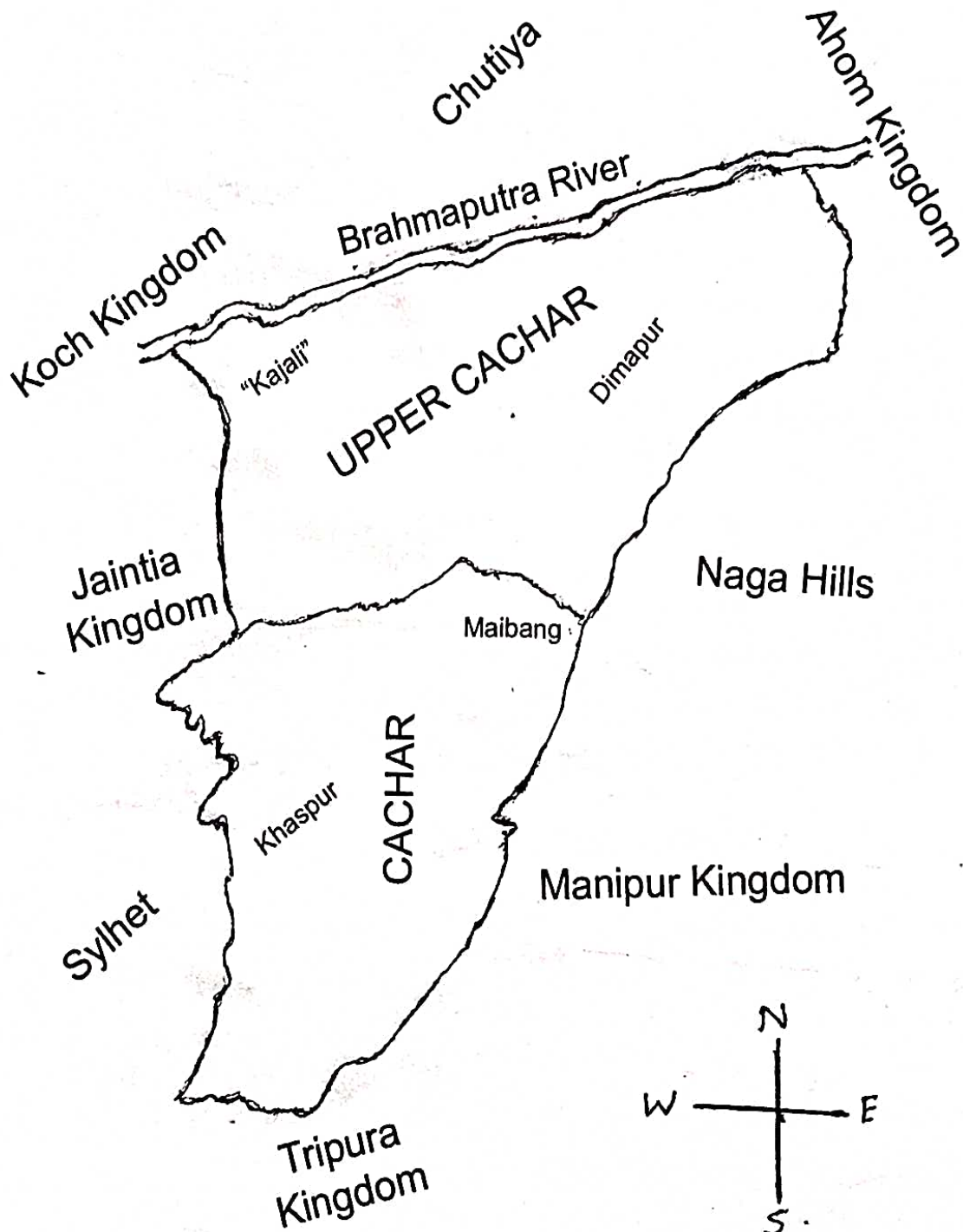
1. General Tularam - 1830 - 1851 A.D.
2. Nakulram } sons of
3. Brajanath } Tularam : 1851 - 1853 A.D.

The Northern Division or Upper Cachar was annexed on August 27, 1853 A.D. by Lord Dalhousie, the Governor - General of India, who was a stern annexationist.

The name of Cachar - a misnomer

It is certain and beyond the murmur of dispute that the district of Cachar did not get its name from *Kachar* or *Katcha-Vata*, a Sanskrit word meaning bordering land as fancied by some outlandish writers. The word *Kachari* was already in use and applied to some tribes, thuswise Boro-Kachari, Mech-Kachari, Thengal - Kachari and so on in the far off Brahmaputra Valley but yet certain

Sketch Map of Cachar (Herambo Kingdom)
(In the 19th Century)



outlandish writers, out of the lack of their knowledge, wrongly identified the Dimasas to be one of these tribes. And hence the confusion in them. When the Dimasas shifted to Southern Assam, these migrated writers mistook them for *Kacharis* and misapplied the word *Kachar* to their country even though the natives of the country called themselves as *Dimasa*.

River-names

Barak – The principal river of the Barak Valley is named as Barak. However, Barak is the later name of the river *Kolongma*. The Dimasas still call the river by this ancient name of *Kolongma*.

River *Kolongma* is bifurcated into two branches named *Surma* and *Kushiyara* at Haritika near Katigora. The Dimasas, specially those who lived in the valleys of the *Surma* and the *Kushiyara* below the river *Kolongma*, used to call the upper part i.e. the part above the two branches as *bra-bokro*, in short *bra-kro* (*bra*=branch, *bokro/kro*=upper part in Dimasa), which finally became reduced to *Barak*. The Dimasa word *bra* meaning branch was obviously unintelligible to the Aryan writers and for why, they mistook it for *boro* (*bra*=*boro*) meaning *very* or *very much* in Sanskrit and Bengali. Thus, to them, *bra-bokro* became *boro-bokro* meaning very zigzag. And as a direct result of which, we find the river *Kolongma* described as *Boro-bokro* giving a distorted meaning of *very zigzag* in the *Vayu Purana*;

*Vindhyapada samudbhuto boro-bokro supunyadah
Yotro snatva jalang pitva narah sadgatimapnuyat*

[বিক্ষ্যাপাদ সমুদ্ভূতো বরবক্র সুপূন্যদঃ
যত্র স্নাত্তা জলং পীত্বা নরঃ সদগতিমাপ্নুয়াত]

- বায়ুপুরাণ

Surma - Surma is the name of one of the two branch rivers given by the Dimasas. Of the two branches, Surma is the principal course and hence, the Dimasas called it Surma : *Sur*= course and *ma* = principal. That Surma is the principal course is testified by the fact that the lower region embracing Sylhet, Tarap etc. is known by the name of Surma valley, not Kushiya valley.

Kushiya - Kushiya is the name of the other branch river. It is the distorted form of the Dimasa word *Khurshiyarai* meaning excavator in the lower region i.e. *padadesha Khononkari* (পাদদেশ খননকারী) in Sanskrit : *Khursi* = excavating, *yarai* = lower region/ lower course.

Koch invasion

In January, 1563, Koch king Naranarayana despatched a large army under his General Chilarai against the Ahoms. A fierce battle took place between the two nations on the bank of river Dikhu. The Ahoms suffered a defeat and acknowledged the Koch suzerainty by promising to pay an annual tribute to the Koch king.

Next Chilarai marched towards the neighbouring Herambo kingdom and invaded Maibang. Herambo king Nirbhaychandrannarayana offered no resistance and avoided conflict by making a tall promise to pay an

annual tribute to the Koch king.

From Maibang, Chilarai is said to have sent fore-runners to the Manipur king (Khagamba Singha?) demanding of him either to submit and pay tribute or face the consequences. The king is said to have preferred to submit by making a tall promise to pay annual tribute.

Though uncorroborated, Chilarai is said to have invaded Tripura and killed the king and installed his (king's) son as the new king on undertaking to pay annual tribute. According to Gait, there is no mention of the war in the Tripura Chronicle and the only reference is found in an Assam Buranji of uncertain date, which is not enough to establish it as an historical fact (A History of Assam, 1992 p.50).

Chilarai is also said to have subjugated the kings of Jaintia, Sylhet and Khyrim and let them off on undertaking by them to pay annual tributes.

Details of tributes promised by the kings: -

Ahom king- Delivery of a good number of youths chosen from the sons of the chief nobles as hostages, 60 elephants, 60 pieces of fine cloth and a large quantity of gold and silver in the form of war indemnity.

Herambo king- delivery of 84 elephants in addition to an annual tribute of 70000 rupees, 1000 gold mohars and 60 elephants.

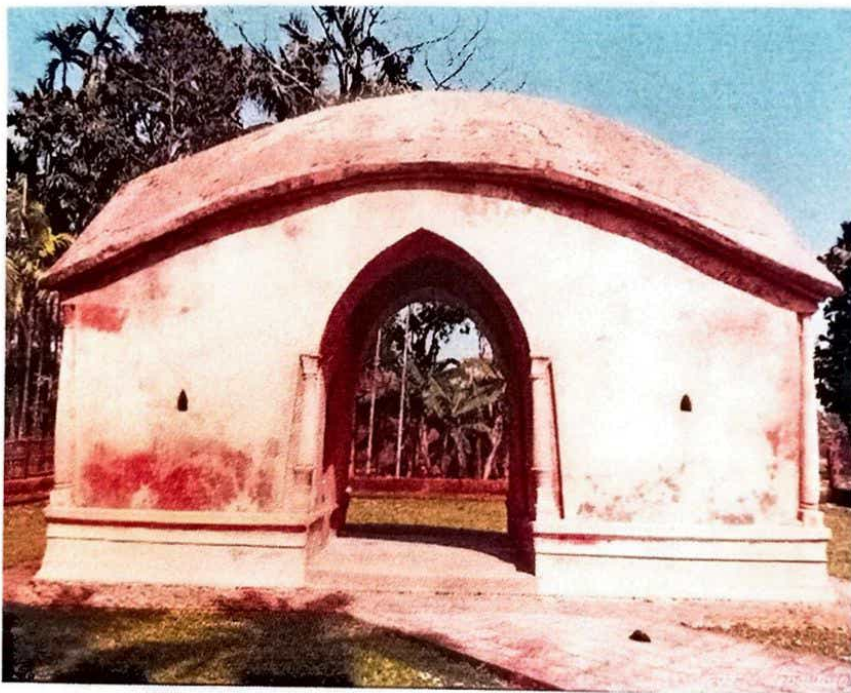
- Manipur king- annual tribute of 20000 rupees, 300 gold mohars and 10 elephants.
- Tripura king- a tribute of 10000 rupees, 100 gold mohars and 30 horses.
- Jaintia king - Payment of regular annual tribute (quantum unknown).
- Sylhet king - a tribute of 100 elephants, 200 horses, 300000 rupees and 10000 gold mohars.
- Khyrim king- a tribute of 15000 rupees, 900 gold mohars, 50 horses and 30 elephants.

Here, there would appear to be a good ground to suppose that no delivery or payment of any kind was made by the local kings to Chilarai before his departure. This probability may be gleaned from the fact that Chilarai had left a small contingent of his army at Brahmapur (Khaspur?) apparently for the purpose of collection of the tributes promised by the local kings. Further, there was also a established *Kutchery* (office) under a steward (Dewan) here for collection. These Dewans are now known as Dehans in the locality.

But the historians now make unduly magnified the establishment of the *Kutchery* as if it were the seat of the Koch capital. Did the Herambo king shared his rulership with the Koch king? If the words of the bargain (promise) were studied as it should be, they were very quick and unmistakably clear that all the local kings, including the Herambo king, were not deposed or dethroned and the simple truth thereof was that they were only under their promise of paying tributes and nothing further.



Temple-Gate of goddess Ugratara at Pragjyotispur (Guwahati) the ancient seat of the Dimasa Kings



Singhadwar,(No.2) Now Known as Elephant Gate, at Khaspur (Cachar), the ancient seat of the Dimasa Kings

NB. The top-covering (roof) of the temple-gate bears resemblance to that of the Elephant-gate connecting Cachar down to

The theory of the Koch rule at Khaspur is, without doubt, a wild speculative, a body without bone. Here, the Dimasas employ a bit of irony as if to say: *did the Koch king show partiality and make a choice of ruling only in the Herambo Kingdom without consuming all the local kingdoms? Did he deceive himself neglecting the golden opportunity?*

Some more lights-

These historians are again under a great mistake when they said that the Herambo prince Lakshnichandra from Maibang married Kanchani Devi, daughter of Bhim Singha, a Dehan king of Khaspur kingdom in 1745 A.D. and it was only in consequence of this marriage that the two Kingdoms merged into a single State.

Apropos of the above, this much let these historians be made known for certain that according to the annals of the Herambos, it was the Herambo king Tamradhwaja who shifted the capital from Maibang to Wa-bari (near Khaspur) in 1701 A.D. where the Herambo kings ruled for about 40 years temporarily till the completion of construction of the capital complex at Khaspur. King Ramchandranarayana shifted the capital to Khaspur in 1740 A.D. This date is testified by a stone inscription dated Saka 1662 (=1740 A.D.) discovered in the Khaspur Rajbari in 2005 A.D. This discovery silenced the voice of all those who wrote counterfeits to suit themselves and tickled their own fancies. Which way shall they take now?

These historians are also not above counterfeits when they wrote that the Cachar territory was earlier ruled by the Tipra kings prior to the arrival of the Dimasas. They never delved deep into the area of origin to know the fact that the Dimasas and the Tipras were a house divided and it was the Herambo prince Kumar Dakshin, the second son of king Trilochan of Dimapur, who founded the Tipra Kingdom by carving out the southern part of the Herambo Kingdom in the early part of the 15th Century. The historians are far away from this historical truth and turned things into fables. The word *Tripura* is a Sanskritisation of the word *Tipra* and *Tiprasa* means the son of *Big Water*. The words *Tiprasa* and *Dimasa* are synonymous words carrying the one and same meaning- *the son of Big Water* (*Tipra* = Big Water, *sa*=son) *Dima*= Big Water, *sa*=son). The word *Tipra* suggests that the people not only hammered the rocks in the hills but also swayed up to the sea (Bay of Bengal).

Historians like Kailash Chandra Singha wrote imaginatives tracing the origin of the Tipras to Yajati of the Mahabharata era. But we are already in the know from the epic account of the Ramayana discussed earlier that the territory in what is now the Tripura was an integral part of ancient Kamrup. Many of the historians also erred in their accounts tracing Tripura as early as the fifth century. But we are reminded of the fact that Hiuen Tsang, who visited Kamrup during the reign of king Bhaskar Barman in the 7th century made tours to various places in Sylhet such as Darapati, Ishanpur, Mahachampa, Jamandwip, Shrikshetra, Kamalanka (Coomilla) and so on all bordering upon the present

Tripura Territory and these places found special mention in the Chinese Monk's account, but no name of Tripura occurred in it. The absence of the name of Tripura is only suggestive of the fact of non-existence of Tripura in those days. This again speaks of the knowledge of failings of these historians.

In addition to whatsoever things have been discussed above, we have some more accounts from these historians which are evidently a production of their active imagination and speculative tamper. However, we resist the temptation to discuss them at any length and shall look at considering to end throwing some more bits of light on the history of Cachar, another Chapter to which the historians had never been kind and fair:-

- (i) It is on record that more than a century prior to the marriage between Lakshmidhara and Kanchani took place in 1745 A.D., the Dimasa King Indrapratapnarayana (1601-1610 A.D.) undertook expeditions from Maibang and conquered Sylhet and Tarap (now in Bangladesh) in 1602 A.D. in memory of which the king struck victory coins in 1602 A.D.
- (ii) Kanchani was the second Queen of king Lakshmidhara. The name of the first/ Chief Queen was Udayavati. Kanchani was the daughter of Chandravati married to Bhim Singha. Chandravati was Udayavati's aunt (mother's younger sister).
- (iii) King Indrapratapnarayana fought with the mighty

Mughals four battles in between 1606 A.D. and 1609 A.D. at Hajurainagar, now in the Patharkandi subdivision of the Karimganj district of Assam and defeated the enemy in all the battles and repulsed them demoralizing the mighty imperial power. This is one of the great historical events of India, no less important than the Saraighat battle where the Ahoms under Lachit Barphukan fought and repulsed the mighty Mughals in 1671 A.D. But it remains unsung.

