UNIT 6: THE AHOMS

UNIT STRUCTURE

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6.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- discuss the origins of the Ahom rulers
- explain the arrival of the Ahoms to Assam and
- describe the events in brief from 1268 A.D. to 1826 A.D.

6.2 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, we discussed at length about the sources for the study of Medieval Assam. In this unit we are going to discuss about the rise of the Ahom power in Assam. You will learn about the struggles of the Ahoms with the indigenous tribes as well as the Turko-Afghan invaders for their establishment in the Brahmaputra Valley.

The dynasty that was established by Sukapha survived for almost six hundred years and became the most dominant power. In this unit, we will describe the rise of the Ahom power and the gradual decline due to the external threats posed by the arrival of the Burmese and the British and also the weakness of the later Ahom rulers.

6.3 ORIGIN OF THE AHOMS

The Ahoms were the members of the Tai race that are quite widespread

Turning back, Sukapha with his followers followed the course of the river Burhi-Dihing and entered the Brahmaputra Valley near Tipam where he had his first headquarters.

For three years Sukapha stayed in Tipam and from there moved down the river staying for a few years at Abhoipur and Habung finally reaching the mouth of the river Dikhow. He stayed in Song-Tak for two years. Again, he turned back and stayed at Simaluguri from where he went to Demow, settling there for six years. But again inundation compelled him to move to Lang-Te-Pha where he built a town. Again, because of flood, Sukapha had to move to the adjacent hill where he built another town Charaideo (Che Tam-Doi) and passed away there in 1268 C.E. During his journey he met many hostile tribes, whom he subdued and brought under control.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q1: Fill in the blanks:

(i) The Ahoms were the members of the _____ race.

(ii) The Ahoms reached the fertile plains of Brahmaputra through the _____ pass.

(iii) Sukapha with his followers followed the course of the river _____ and entered the Brahmaputra Valley

(iv) Sukapha passed away in _____.

(v) *Lengdon* is reffered to God _____ by the *Deodhais*.

6.5 EVENTS FROM 1268 C.E. – 1826 C.E.

- **Foundation of the Ahom Rule**

Before his death, Sukapha laid the foundation of the Ahom kingdom in the Brahmaputra Valley on a firm basis. He fought against the local chieftains and brought them under his control but he followed a generous policy towards them and treated them as equals. Sukapha maintained connection with his ancestral kingdom of Mong Mao and sent tributes to its ruler. This tradition was continued by his successors until the reign of Sukhangpha (1293-1332 C.E.).

from his time. It must also be mentioned here that collection of census data took place from this time. The use of firearms also began from Suhungmung's reign. He extended the Ahom territory on all sides through his prowess.

Suklenmung succeeded Suhungmung as the next Ahom ruler. His reign witnessed hostile relations with the Koch ruler Nara Narayana. The Koch army under Chilarai (brother of Nara Narayana) fought at the banks of the river Dikrai and was able to defeat their rival. Another battle was fought at Kaliabor, and the Ahoms were again routed with a heavy loss. Soon Suklenmung attacked and encamped at the bank of river Pichala. This resulted in a disaster as the supplies of the Koch army were cut off and many of them died. In a second engagement at the same place, Chilarai, the Koch commander inflicted another crushing defeat on the Ahoms.

In July 1563, the Koch commander, Tipu led an invasion up to the Brahmaputra. But the Ahoms defeated him. In 1570 again, Tipu and Bhitarual raised an army against the Ahoms but the Ahom army was successful in crushing their efforts. After the death of Nara Narayan the Ahom-Koch relations entered a new phase. The division of the Koch kingdom into two between the successors of Nara Narayana led to a war which was complicated with the entry of the Muhammedans and the Ahoms. Dharma Narayana allied with the Ahoms while Lakhsmi Narayana joined the Muslim forces. In the end, the Koch kingdom ceased to exist as an independent kingdom and the Koch Raja of Darrang became a tributary of the Ahoms. In most of the confrontations, the Ahoms were successful against the Muslims.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q2: What is the significance of the rule of Sudangpha?

.....

Q3. What was the role of the Sadiya Khowa Gohain?

.....

Q4. Who was the Muslim commander who first led the Muhammadan invasion in the Ahom history?

.....

and occupied it. But slowly the rainy season set in. Taking advantage of it, the Ahom army launched some surprise attacks on the invaders. Most of the country had been re -occupied by the Ahoms and Jayadhwaj Singha returned to take charge. The Ahoms attacked the Mughal army day in and day out. When the floods receded, the Mughals again prepared for a fresh attack. But due to the famine in Bengal, supplies were not reaching the Mughal forces. Mir Jumla also fell ill and his soldiers were not at all ready to risk another rainy season. Thus the Nawab was compelled to negotiate for peace with the Ahom king. The famous Treaty of Ghiladhari Ghat was concluded on January 9, 1663.

The next Muslim invasion took place during the time of Chakradhvaj Singha or Supungmung. Raja Ram Singh along with Rashid Khan was sent by Aurangzeb in 1668. The Ahoms were initially successful but were soon routed.

Fresh problem started during the time of Udayaditya Singha or Sunyatpha, when Raja Ram Singh demanded for the restoration of old boundaries. Two battles were fought on land and water. The bravery of Lachit Barphukan led to the victory of the Ahoms against the Mughal army in 1671 C.E. which is famous as the battle of Saraighat. The defeat of the Mughals sealed their fate. Hadira became the new Ahom-Mughal boundary.

During the time of Gadadhar Singha, the battle of Itakhuli was fought against the Muhammadans in 1681 C.E. As a result Guwahati was re-occupied by the Ahoms and Manas was declared as a boundary between the Ahoms and the Mughals. This was the last Muhammadan war. The rule of Gadadhar Singh is marked by the restoration of the prestige of the Ahoms.

He was succeeded by his son Sukhrungpha or better known as Rudra Singh. He led a major campaign against the Kacharis who had asserted their independence under their ruler Tamradhvaj. Rudra Singha dispatched the Ahom army under the Bar Barua and the Pani Phukan to subdue them. The Kachari capital, Maibong was occupied and a huge booty taken. While the Pani Phukan proceeded to Raha, he occupied Demera without any resistance from the Kacharis because they were afraid of the Ahom army. But very soon, Rudra Singh was compelled to call back the forces due to the rainy season.

officials were put to death. However, his captivity did not last long and was installed as the king. The Moamaria Gosains were tortured and killed in large numbers.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q6: Fill in the blanks:

(i) The battle of Bharalimukh was fought during the time of.....

(ii) ..... led the Ahom army during the battle fo Saraighat.

(iii) The Moamaria rebellion began during the reign of .....

Q7: When was the last Muhammadan war fought?

.....

Q8: Who was Mir Jumla?

.....

- **Downfall of the Ahoms**

The early signs of the downfall of the Ahom dynasty began to appear from the time of Gaurinath Singh who ascended the throne in 1780. His reign witnessed the second Moamaria rebellion. The atrocities committed on the Moamarias and their families sparked new conspiracies and plots against the Ahom monarch. The initial attempts of the Moamarias ended in failures. But soon the royalist forces found it hard to resist the armed advances of the rebels and soon the Burha Gohain retreated to Rangpur. Garhgaon was soon occupied by the rebels. The tough struggle raged for a long time and the people gradually started losing heart and would have submitted to the rebels but for the untiring effort of the Burha Gohain. It was the Raja of Manipur who offered assistance to Gaurinath Singh. In a serious turn of events, the Ahom king appealed for British help which led to the arrival of Captain Welsh. With his arrival, Captain Welsh was able to curb the powers of the rebels.

Chandrakant Singh, brother of the late king was eventful for it marks the rule of weak kings and the handling of the state affairs by the powerful



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q9: Match the following:

(i) Captain Welsh arrived in Assam during the time of .....

(ii) The battle of Ghiladhari was fought during the rule of .....

(iii) The Treaty of Yandaboo was signed in .....

(iv) The Raja of ..... offered help to Gaurinath Singh during the Moamaria rebellion.

(v) The first Anglo-Burmese war operation took place in .....



6.6 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt:

- the origin of the Ahoms and their early settlement in Assam
- the rise of the glory of the Ahom ruler from 1228 C.E. till 1780
- the downfall of the mighty Ahoms and the subsequent Anglo-Burmese wars.

6.7 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H.K. (2003)*: The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. II & III 2nd edn, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati.
2) Baruah, S.L.,(1996): *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.
3) Bhuyan, A.C., (1999): *Political History Assam*, Publication Board Assam, Vol. II & III 2nd edn, Guwahati.



6.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answer to Q No. 1:

(i) Tai

(ii) Patkai

Q4. Raja Ram Singh was a contemporary of which Ahom ruler?

(B) Short Questions

Q1. Write a short note on–

(a) Rudra Singh

(b) Sukapha

(c) Ahom-Kachari struggle

(d) Captain Welsh's mission

(C) Long Questions

Q1. Explain in brief Mir Jumla's invasion of Assam.

Q2. Describe the rise of Ahom power in Assam during the 17th century.

Q3. In your opinion what led to the downfall of the Ahom dynasty?

Q4. Describe in brief the Moamaria uprising in Assam.

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