UNIT 2: ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE AHOM MONARCHY

UNIT STRUCTURE

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2.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the form of government in the Ahom administration,
- Explain the central and local administration of the Ahoms,
- Describe the judicial administration of the Ahoms,
- Discuss the revenue administration of the Ahoms,
- Explain the military administration of the Ahoms.

2.2 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, you have read about the Ahom Monarchy at its high peak. In this unit, we shall discuss the Ahom system of administration that stood at the base of the mighty Ahom Empire. We shall discuss the form of government, central and local administration, judicial administration revenue administration and military administration of the Ahoms.

2.3 ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM OF THE AHOMS

The Ahoms are a section of the great Tai race. They established a kingdom in the Brahmaputra Valley in the early part of the 13th century and ruled Assam till the first quarter of the 19th century until the establishment of the authority of the British East India Company. The long period of continuous rule of 600 years was partly due to their efficient system of administration.

The Ahom Government had no written constitution unlike modern state. It was largely based on customs and conventions. These were embodied in the written chronicles. The constitution of the Ahoms meant a few chronicles and certain customs. The administrative system of the Ahom was highly efficient and provided the needed stability to the expanding Ahom kingdom thereby allowing them to establish their hegemony over the Brahmaputra Valley of Assam.

The Ahom form of government was monarchical. Monarchy was absolute in form but limited in practice having in it democratic elements. The king, styled as *Swargadeo* was the supreme authority. However, at times, the powerful *Gohains* (the *Burhagohain,* the *Bargohain* and the *Barpatragohain*) overshadowed the weak Ahom rulers. Theoretically, the ruler was the source of all power and the abode of justice. The king was absolute, but he was also required to consult the *Burhagohain,* the *Bargohain,* the *Barpatragohain,* the *Barbarua,* the *Barphukan,* the *Meldagia Rajas,* the *Datiyaliya Gohains* and the *Kartaliya Rajas*. Divinity was attached to Ahom kingship and the king was called *Swargadeo*, an Assamese equivalent of the Tai-Ahom word *Chaopha* (the king of heaven). But in the later part of Ahom rule, the concept of divine origin of kingship took a perverted form, and a prince having any physical imperfection was considered ineligible to sit on the Ahom throne.

Generally, the right of succession was hereditary on the male line in compliance with law of primogeniture. But in the case of absence of a legal claimant, the throne was offered to the king's brother or nearest relative. This duty of selecting a king was vested in the three great Gohains namely, the Burhagohain, the Bargohain, and the Barpatragohain who could even

depose the king on grounds of inefficiency or delinquency. According to the Ahom theory of kingship, "He, whose fore-fathers were never rulers, can hardly be expected to be a king." In accordance with the Tai-Ahom tradition, under no circumstance, could anyone ascend the throne, unless he was a prince of the royal blood line and a direct descendant of Sukapha on the male side. The representations of the different Ahom families were an important factor in the appointment of a king. The king had to be selected from amongst six Ahom families: *Charingia, Dihingia, Namrupia, Samaguria, Parvatia* and *Tungkhungia*. The selection of a king by the three *Gohains* had to be approved by the *Barmel* or the Great Council. The Barmel constituted of the *Gohains, Phukans, Baruas,* and *Rajkhowas* of the state which was held in the great council chamber.



LET US KNOW

Rudra Singha violated the traditional right of succession by his death-bed injunction that after him all his sons should rule the kingdom in succession, i.e. one after another.

Great importance was attached to the royal coronation or enthronement ceremony of the Ahom kings called *Singari-gharat-utha*. This ceremony was an elaborate one and was celebrated with great sanctity, pomp, merriment and feasting for several days. However, the rituals including the days of festivities varied from time to time with the Hindu influence gradually increasing. Only after this ceremony the king could issue coins, and could use the title 'Singha' at the end of their names.

2.3.1 CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

The Ahom administrative system was different from the administrative system of the contemporary Mughal or other Indian ruling dynasties. There was no clear division like the central, provincial and local administration. The Ahom kingdom was not clearly divided into provinces and districts. However, in the areas occupied by the

Ahoms from the Mughals, the *Pargana* system continued to prevail. As there were no administrative divisions, there was no difference between the central and provincial governments with regarding departmental officials.

In the Ahom administrative system, the king or Swargadeo was the supreme head of the state and at the head of the government. The king had the supreme authority over all his subjects. He was the absolute source of all power. All honours, titles, offices and decisions were issued by him. The king was the highest executive, legislative and judicial authority, besides being the head of the army. Moreover, the Ahom king had certain exclusive rights and special privileges, the misappropriation of which was punishable.

Next to the king was an aristocratic body of ministers known as *Patramantri* who used to assist or advise the king in administrative matters. Among them, the three great Gohains were the permanent and hereditary ministers of the state. All three of them were of equal rank. The king had to act according to the advice of the Gohains. He could not rule like an absolute monarch. The kings used to invite the Gohains to the capital through a *Kataki* (messenger) to discuss the matters of state in the *Sarumel* (little council). For discussion of important matters there was also the *Barchora* (Council-chamber). The Ahom kings also had a private secretary, the *Majindar Barua* who was always with the king. He used to look after both domestic and foreign affairs.

Interregnums-

A period between reigns or political regimes when normal government is suspended.

There was no specific office marked as *Rajmantri*. The king used to consult any of his councillors on highly confidential matters. Still there were 27 Rajmantris during the Ahom rule. The Rajmantri used to be confidant of the king who consulted him on all affairs and was guided by his advice. The councillors also possessed the power of governance as we have seen during the two *interregnums* (1376-1380 A.D. and 1689-1697 A.D.) in Ahom history.



LET US KNOW

The *Patramantri* was the Council of Five who assisted the king. It consisted of the Burhagohain, the Bargohain, the Barpatragohain, the Barbarua and the Barphukan. But the council evolved in several stages. Originally the Burhagohain and the Bargohain were appointed by Sukapha. Three centuries later Suhungmung (1497-1539 A.D.) created the office of the Barpatragohain. Still later, the other two offices of the Barbarua and the Barphukan were added by Susengpha or Pratap Singha (1603-1641 A.D.) to meet the needs of the expanding Ahom kingdom. However, the last two offices were next in rank to those of the three principal Gohains or *Patra Gohains* and were not hereditary as those of the three Gohains. The three Gohains were also known as Dangarias (Elders).

There was also the *Barmel* or the king's Great Council. It was an assembly of Ahom and non-Ahom officers of the state for transacting business of national importance. When necessity demanded, the Barmel or Great Council was summoned. It was not a law making body, nor did it possess the power to override the decisions of the king. Thus, it had no legislative power and was purely an advisory body as the king was not bound to accept the decision of the Barmel. But the decisions or the suggestions of the Barmel were rarely rejected. The king paid respect to the wishes of the Barmel.

For security reasons the king used to appoint officers entrusted with great responsibility from certain families of hereditary nobility, and commanders and camp followers of Sukapha. A Gohain's son normally succeeded his father as Gohain unless he was found unfit. In such cases, the brother of the Gohain or son of the Gohain's brother could be selected by the king with the concurrence of the two other Gohains. In the Ahom system of administration, there was a balance of power between the king and his councillors. While a

king could be deposed in extreme cases, a king could also dismiss his councillors on grounds of unsatisfactory performance. This system of checks and balances was a unique feature of the Ahom administrative system.

For looking after the civil administration there were about 12 Phukans and 20 Baruas selected from the hereditary nobility who were responsible to the king. The Barbarua in his administration was assisted by an advisory council of 6 Phukans namely, *Naobaicha Phukan, Bhitarual Phukan, Na Phukan, Dihingia Phukan, Deka Phukan* and *Neog Phukan*. They were collectively called *Chorar Phukans* or *Choruwa Phukans*. To assist the Barphukan, there were officials like *Dihingia Phukan, Chetiya Phukan, Pani Phukan, Deka Phukan, Rajkhowas* and *Panidihingias*. There were also the Barua, Hazarika, Saikia and Bora. Besides, there were several other miscellaneous officials like *Katakis* (royal messengers), Kakatis (clerks), *Dolois* (astrologers), *Neog* (both military and civil), etc.

2.3.2 LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

It has already been stated above that there was neither division of the Ahom territory nor any specific difference between central and local or provincial administration. However, the Ahom rulers believed in decentralization of power with proper checks and balances. Hence, they appointed frontier governors to look after the administration of different areas.

For smooth local administration different categories of governors were appointed by the Ahom Government. Among the governors, the *Sadiya Khowa Gohain*, *Marangi Khowa Gohain* and *Salal Gohain* occupied a distinctive position in the Ahom administration and were known as *Datiyaliya Gohains* which corresponds to modern political agents.

- The Sadiya Khowa Gohains had their headquarters at Sadiya and administered the territories conquered from the

Chutiyas. They also had to keep watch on the Mishmis, Adis, Hill Miris, Dafalas, Khampas and other small tribes.

- The Marangi Khowa Gohain form his headquarter at Marangi administered the region that was contiguous to that of the Nagas West of the Dhansiri river. He had to defend the lower valley of the Dhansiri from the Kacharis, Nagas, Mikirs, and other tribes.
- The Salal Gohain from his headquarter at Kaliabor administered the territories from Biswanath to present Mangaldoi district. He had to deal with the Northern hill tribes, namely the Bhutias, Akas, Dafalas and Miris. He also had to defend the *duars* (hill passes) namely, Chari-duar, Na-duar and Chai-duar from the Dafla raids.

Some *Chakial Gohains* (Gohains in-charge of outposts on the frontier) were also appointed for security reasons.

- Two *Kajalimukhia Gohains* were appointed and they were stationed at Kajali with over all charge of the civil and revenue administration of the area. They had to protect the Western frontier of the Ahom kingdom from the Jayantias, Kacharis and Mughals. They also dealt with Dimarua and a part of Jayantia (Gobha, Neli and Mayang).
- The *Jagial Gohain* was stationed at Jagi *Chokey* (outpost) and controlled the civil as well as revenue administration of the area. He also collected information of the area and conducted political relations with Jayantia.
- The *Rahiyal Gohain* stationed at Raha Chokey looked after the general and revenue administration of the Nagaon region. He also collected information about the Cachar area and the local hill tribes.

Besides, there were 7 *Chokeys*, each under a *Chokial* stationed at the Chokey to govern it and gather news for the king.

There were also the *Meldagia* or *Melkhowa Rajas* to look after the local administration. The princes and the close relatives of

the ruling monarch were also appointed as governors in certain areas and were given the title of Melkhowa Raja. The hereditary estates of Charing, Tipam and Namrup were created solely for the settlement of princes of royal blood. Of them the heir-apparent was usually made the Charing raja. Next to him in order of succession was the Tipam Raja. Gradually other areas like Dihing, Samaguri and Tungkhung were also placed under members of the royal family..

All three Dangarias were also given territories where they exercised their rule almost like a sovereign. The authority of the Burhagohain extended from the North of the Dikhou river upto Sadiya. The jurisdiction of the Bargohain extended from the south of the Dikhou river to Kaliabor. The Barpatragohain too had its own area of jurisdiction. The Barbarua with headquarter initially at Garhgaon, and later on Rangpur had jurisdiction over the central region of the Ahom dominions from Sadiya in the East to Kaliabor in the West, including North Darrang, Golaghat, Nagaon and Raha except those areas which were under the Gohains and Meldagia Rajas. He was like the Viceroy of Eastern or Upper Assam. The Barphukan was the Viceroy of Western or Lower Assam. Initially the headquarters of the Barphukan was at Kaliabor, but later on it was shifted to Gauhati. His jurisdiction extended from Kaliabor to Kamrup, Darrang, Nagaon and the *duars* from Kaliabar to Goalpara.

The governors appointed by the Ahom Government were of different ranks and their constitutional position was not equal. The ruling chief who had made their submission to the Ahoms were also appointed as governors. Most of the governors were mere military officers and each of them commanded thousands of Paiks. This shows that the governors along with the prime responsibility of looking after the administration of the area under their charge had to look after the defence of the nearby frontiers. In general, the governors enforced law and order, collected revenue and administered justice in their respective areas of jurisdiction. The king had the power to appoint and dismiss any governor. The Ahom administration provided

a co-ordination between the local administration and central administration.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. No. 1: Write True/False:

a) The Ahom Government had no written constitution unlike modern state.
(True/False)

b) The Ahom king had to be selected from amongst seven Ahom families.
(True/False)

c) The Ahom kingdom was not clearly divided into provinces and districts.
(True/False)

d) The Barbarua in his administration was assisted by an advisory council of 4 Phukans.
(True/False)

e) The Ahom rulers did not believe in decentralization of power.
(True/False)

f) The governors appointed by the Ahom Government were of different ranks.
(True/False)

Q. No 2:Fill in the blanks:

a) The Ahom form of government was ……..……

b) The right of succession was hereditary on the ……..…….. line.

c) The aristocratic body of ministers was known as ……..

d) The Majindar Barua was the …… secretary of the Ahom king.

e) The Sadiya Khowa Gohains had their headquarters at ……..

f) The …….. Gohain stationed at Raha Chokey.

2.3.3 JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

In the Ahom administration, there was no separate department for the administration of justice. As there was no separation of powers, the executive judicial and legislative powers were vested in the same person. The king was the supreme head of the executive, legislative and judicial branch of the government. Appeals could be made to the king's court from the Barbarua's and Phukan's court.

- **Court of the King**

  At the top of the Ahom Judicial System was the king's court. It was the supreme and the highest court of appeal. In the absence of the king, it was the *Nyaya Sodha Phukan* who exercised jurisdiction. This court had both original and appellate jurisdiction. It tried all cases both, civil and criminal as well as cases of rebellion or treason. As the highest court, it received appeals from the courts of the Barbarua, Barphukan and Sadiya Khowa Gohain. It also received appeals from the Phukan's court. The judgment of the Nyaya Sodha Phukan, who acted as the king's representative, was final.

- **Court of the Barbarua**

  Next in authority to the king's court was the court of the Barbarua. He was the chief executive and judicial officer and tried all important disputes both civil and criminal in his court. He also exercised original and appellate jurisdiction and received appeals from the subordinate courts of the Phukan, Rajkhowa and Barua. This court was so powerful that even the three Dangarias were not exempted from its jurisdiction. It could issue decrees for inflicting capital punishments on ordinary people. The king's approval was necessary for inflicting heavy punishment upon the official of high rank.

- **Court of the Phukan**

  Paiks-

Male servants for rendering services.

Next to the Barbarua's court, the courts of the Phukans occupied a distinctive position in the Ahom judicial machinery. Each of them tried the disputes arising among the *Paiks* they commanded. The Phukan's Court also exercised appellate jurisdiction. It received appeals from the decrees of sub-ordinate officers who administered justice to their respective division of men. The verdict of these courts could be challenged in the court of the Barbarua and finally in the court of the Nyaya Sodha Phukan, who represented the sovereign. The Phukans could award higher punishments, but not the death penalty.

- **Court of the Baruas**

  In the absence of a Phukan, the Barua supervised the administration of justice. He tried both the civil and criminal cases of the people under his immediate command. But appeal could be made to a higher court against the decision of the court of the Barua.

- **Court of the Governors**

  The courts of the governors had full jurisdiction in civil and criminal matters without reference to the royal authority. They could even inflict capital punishment. An order of approval was always communicated to royal authority in writing along with a written account of proceedings for consideration. The governors exercises both original and appellate jurisdiction. The Barphukan's court exercised jurisdiction over a large number of people in Kamrup. Although appeals could be made against the decision of the Barphukan in the king's court, this was rare.

- **Court of the Rajkhowas**

  The Rajkhowas administered justice in their areas. They had separate courts for administering justice to the *paiks* under their jurisdiction. Both the civil and criminal cases were tried

in their courts. They could inflict only petty punishments without any reference to the royal authority. Appeals from the decisions of the court of a Rajkhowa were heard in the king's court by the Nyaya Sodha Phukan.

- **Court of the Dangarias**

The three Dangarias namely, the Burhagohain, the Bargohain and the Barpatragohain were the judges of their respective provinces. Each of them presided over a court in which both civil and criminal cases were tried. These courts had no appellate jurisdiction. They exercised independent powers over their clansmen, subordinate officials, and paiks. In these courts the opinions of assessors were taken and punishment was inflicted accordance with existing customs and rules of moral code. In the case of death sentence their orders could not sanction any form of punishment that entailed shedding the blood of criminals but they had the power to inflict death by drowning. No appeals could be referred against the decisions of the court of Dangarias.

- **Village Court**

The minor disputes at the village level were settled locally in the village Namghars, open place or in the house of an influential person in the assembly of villagers. This was known as the *Meldowan*. When the important disputes were considered, this Meldowan was not confined to men of a particular village alone. The leaders of the neighbouring villages were also invited to attend the meetings of the *Mels*. Every member of this court had a voice in the settlement of its affairs. An elderly or influential aristocratic person was chosen as the foreman. He held an enquiry in the presence of the parties to the disputes and the assembled villagers. The decision of such Mel was taken unanimously. If unanimity could not be reached, the decision of the majority prevailed.

- **Other Courts of Kamrup**

  In Kamrup, Choudhurys were entrusted with administering justice at the local level. They owned the lands, which were let out for rent. They also settled the disputes which arose among their dependents. Like the Choudhurys, the *Talukdars* in the *Taluks* settled minor disputes.

2.3.4 REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

A unique feature of the Ahom administration was its revenue system. There were differences in the revenue system that prevailed in different parts of the Ahom kingdom. The *Paik System* mostly prevailed all over the Ahom kingdom from Kaliabor upto Sadiya. We shall now discuss the Paik System.

- **Paik System**

  During the period of Ahom rule people were was organised under the Paik system, also known as the *Khel System*. Under this system every adult male population of the kingdom between the age group of 16 to 50 was registered as a Paik for rendering service to the state. Initially 4 Paiks and later on 3 formed a unit called *Got*. The first Paik in a Got was called the *Mul*, the second one was called the *Dewal* and the third one, the *Tewal*. In a Got, the Paiks rendered service to the state in rotation, one Paik serving for a period of 3 months (later 4 months) in a year. Besides rendering personal service to the state, the Paik also had to provide some service to their masters. The cultivation and other domestic work of the Paik on duty to the state were looked after by the other Paiks of his Got. However, during an emergency, 2 or 3 Paiks were recruited from each Got, i.e. mainly during a war for rendering military service.

  Some of the Paiks were also organised into professional Khels. The professional Khels were engaged in activities like boat building, arrow making, etc for the state. The Paiks were broadly

divided into two classes - *Kanri* and *Chamua*. The regular peasants who were bound to give service to the state as a soldier in times of war and as a labourer in times of peace were called *Kanri Paiks*. Peasants of good birth or relative affluence were called *Chamua Paiks*. They could enjoy exemption from personal state service by paying a commutation fee of Rs.3 per head per annum as *Ga-dhan*. There were also other Paiks like *Bilatiyas*, who worked as tenants in the private landed estates of the nobles; *Dewaliyas*, who were allotted to the temples and Satras; and *Bahatiyas*, who were to render service to their respective hill masters. The Bilatiyas and Dewaliyas were exempted from paying a number of taxes and rendering military service unless the situation so demanded.

In return for their services to the state, each Paik was allotted free of charge, 2 *puras* of best arable land called *Ga-mati*. The land however belonged to the Khel and the Paik enjoying the share could not claim hereditary rights to it. Besides, the paiks also had his *Bari-Mati* (garden land) initially free of charge which was his private property on a hereditary basis. Later on a poll tax of Rs1/- was imposed as people started to clear more and more waste lands. The Paiks under the professional Khels were regarded as peasants. When they did engage in other crafts, they were taxed at the fixed rate relating to the nature of the craft. The gold washers and brass workers were taxed at Rs.5/-, oil pressurers and fishermen at Rs. 3/- and silk weavers at Rs.2/- annually. The royal authority kept a strict supervision on the professional Paiks so that trade relations could not develop among them.

The Paiks were rigidly supervised to bring about efficiency in the Paik or Khel system. Over every 20 Paiks there was an officer called *Bora*, over him was a *Saikia* commanding 100 Paiks, then a Hazarika commanding 1000 Paiks, over him a Barua commanding 2000 Paiks, next a Rajkhowa commanding 3000 Paiks and then a Phukan commanding 6000 Paiks.

- **Lower Assam**

As stated above, the Paik System prevailed in Upper Assam from Kaliabar to Sadiya. In Kamrup, the *Pargana* System which had been introduced by the Mughals was retained. The Ahoms after occupying Kamrup continued with the Pargana System, mixing it with the Paik System to suit their administrative requirements. Under this system, Kamrup was divided into 26 Parganas. Every Pargana was placed under the charge of a Choudhury, who received remuneration in the form of a certain portion of land under his management. A Pargana was further divided into *Taluks* consisting of 4 or 5 villages. A *Taluk* was placed under the charge of a *Talukdar*, who was granted land as salary. The Talukdars were assisted by junior officials like *Thakurias* and *Patgiris*, who were also allowed to hold land as remuneration.

The cultivable land was divided into three categories- *Kheraj* (revenue paying), *Nisf-Kheraj* (half-revenue paying) and *Lakheraj* (revenue free). The Ahom kings continued this classification and donated Lakheraj lands for religious or charitable purpose. The Lakheraj lands were further classified into different categories namely, *Brahmotter* (to the Brahmanas), *Dharmottar* (for religious and charitable purpose, example: Satras), and *Devottar* (for the maintenance of the temples). Devottar lands were further classified as *Bhogdani* and *Paikan* lands. Bhogdani lands were held by the peasants on the condition of payment of *bhog* (articles of food required by custom for offering to deity) to the temple deity. While, the Paikan lands were held by the peasants on condition of rendering service to the temple. For the financial assistance of the mosques, lands categorised as *Peernum* or *Peerpal* were granted.

The revenue administration in Darrang was similar to that of Kamrup. The sole difference was that in Kamrup on Bari-Mati (homestead), a house tax called *Ghar-Kar* was imposed. While, in Darrang this tax was collected in the form of hearth tax called *Juhal-*

Kar or *Charoo-dhan*. In the tributary states of Rani, Luki, Beltola and others, lands were held jointly by the community according to the customary tribal system.

In addition to land revenue, other sources of revenue were the tributes paid by the tributary rulers in cash or kind, *dan* (sales tax), *phat* (duty on market places), *hat* (tax on buying and selling in the market), *ghat* (tax on river crossing), *jalkar* (tax on fishing in rivers and lakes), *yavakshar* (tax for preparing gun powder), etc.

2.3.5 MILITARY ADMINISTRATION

The Ahoms established an independent kingdom in the Brahmaputra Valley which lasted for a period of 600 years. This was possible because they had an efficient military organization. A unique feature of the Ahom army was that it was drawn from all sections of the people. Under the Paik System, all able bodied men of the Ahom kingdom were bound to render compulsory military service. There was no need to maintain a huge army. The non-serving Paiks constituted a standing army which could be mobilized at short notice by the *Kheldar* through his subordinate officers. There were also contingents supplied by the Bhuyans and the other vassal chieftains.

The Barbarua was the Commander-in-chief of Upper Assam and the Barphukan that of Lower Assam. During an emergency, the Gohains, the royal princes and even the king himself led the men in battle. There were 12 military Phukans, 6 in the Rangpur establishment and 6 stationed at Guwahati to ensure efficiency in the military administration. There was a regular system of gradation of officers in the Ahom army. The Paiks, who were supervised by Boras, the Saikias, and Hazarikas were commanded by the higher military officials namely, the Phukans, the Rajkhowas, and the Baruas. The Phukans had 6000, the Rajkhowas had 3000, the Baruas had 2000, the Hazarikas had 1000, the Saikias had 100, and the Boras had 20 men under their command.

The full contingent of the Ahom army consisted of infantry, navy, artillery, elephant, cavalry and spies. Technical skill and general excellence of the Assamese infantry was very sound which is even referred to in the Persian chronicles. The strength of infantry was very high. The navy was an important wing of the Ahom army. The naval department was under the supervision of the *Naosaliya Phukan*. It was largely due to the Ahom navy that the mighty Mughals had to relinquish their hopes of establishing a permanent base in Assam. The war boats called *Bacharis* were very strong and durable. These were furnished with big guns and cannons with the capacity of carrying 70 to 80 men. For manufacturing the large boats there was a central workshop called *Barnaosal* located initially at Garhgaon and later at Rangpur. Besides, smaller workshops called *Naosals* were there at Garhgaon, Jaipur, Majuli and Dergaon.

Artillery was an important part of Ahom warfare. The Ahom soldiers were experts in making various kinds of guns, match locks, artillery and big cannons. An officer called *Khargharia Phukan* looked after the manufacture of fire arms and gun powder.

Elephantry was placed under the charge of *Hati Barua*. *Hati Chungi*, a section of the Moran tribe supplied the elephants to the state. Elephants were used to break through forts and palisades as well as in clearing thick jungles so that the infantry could pass through. It is quite interesting that the over all charge of the elephantry was entrusted to a Barua, whose rank was below that of a Phukan. The cavalry too was placed under the charge of a Barua called *Ghora Barua*. He was required to maintain a registrar of the horses. He classified them according to their breed, age, colour and size. It was also the duty of the Ghora Barua, to lead the Ahom cavalry in the battle field. But the use of horse was very limited in the battle field as horses were not easily available to the in Assam and had to be imported. The *Buranjis* (Ahom Chronicles) mention only a few occasions when the Ahoms used horses in battle.

The Ahoms had a highly developed espionage system. Prior to an expedition spies were sent to the enemy camp to gather information about the strength and war strategy of the rivals. Forts were constructed by the Ahoms at strategic locations and this policy was much admired by the Mughals. The important forts on the North bank of the Brahmaputra were Chamdhara, Singri, Srighat and Agiathuti, while on the South bank the forts were at Lakhugarh, Simalugarh, Kaliabar, Kajali and Pandu. Subsequently, Guwahati and Jagighopa were also fortified. Forts were made with mud, bamboo and wood. But sometimes grass was also used. The forts were adequately garrisoned and usually had a powerful naval contingent at the nearest possible port. Subsequently people also mastered the technique of constructing bridges of boats across the river Brahmaputra. The main weapons of war were swords, spears, axes, maces, bows, arrows, etc. The soldiers were expert in guerrilla warfare.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q.3: Who was the supreme head of the executive, legislative and judicial branch of the Ahom Government?

……

Q.4: Whose court was in next in authority to the king's court in the Ahom judicial system?

……

Q.5: Who administered justice at the local level in Kamrup?

……

Q.6: By what name the second Paik in a Got was known as?

……

Q.7: Who were known as Kanri Paiks?

……

Q.8: Name the three categories of cultivable land.

……

Q.9: Who was the Commander-in-Chief of the Ahom army in Lower Assam?

…….

Q.10: What was the total number of military Phukans in the Ahom military administration?

…….

Q.11: Under whose supervision was the naval department in the Ahom military administration?

…….

Q.12: Who looked after the manufacture of fire arms and gun powder?

…….



2.8 LET US SUM UP

After going through this unit, you have learnt about

- the administrative system that was prevalent in Assam during the Ahom period.
- the nature of government which was monarchical has been discussed in this unit. There was a strong central government having decentralization of power with proper checks and balances.
- a good local administrative framework was there. The judicial system had a gradation of judicial courts.
- the revenue administration mainly centred round the Paik System in Upper Assam, whereas in Lower Assam, the Pargana System did prevail.
- the military administration was too an efficient one.



2.9 FURTHER READING

1) Barpujari, H.K: *The Comprehensive History of Assam, Volume-II*

2) Baruah, S.L: *A Comprehensive History of Assam*