

THE BACK-GROUND OF ASSAMESE CULTURE.

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অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ প্ৰাৰম্ভিক
মুখ্য পুৰণা

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and the locality where she passed the rest of her life as a nun, near the port town at the southern end of the kingdom was named after her as Shella hat. The present town of Sylhet was the biggest port town for export and import of Jaintia and was within the jurisdiction of that kingdom. Near the residence of Shella a small market place was established for her facility, for as a nun she would not go far off, and this was called Shella-Hat. It is presumed that this name has gradually been transformed into Shil-Hat or Sylhet.

Guhak also renounced the world as a mendicant after the death of his daughter, but before he did so, he apportioned the kingdom equally amongst his three sons. The kingdom comprised the whole of the Jaintia Hills with their extensions over a portion of the present Sylhet district which in those days was like a vast sea in its major portion except some dots of high land in places.

The eldest son Jayanta got the parent kingdom comprising the hills, the second son Gurak was allotted the southern plains with the port, *Gaur & Laur.* and the third Laruk was given the South Western portion. These three kingdoms ultimately were known as Jaintia, Gaur-Sylhet and Laur.

It is not possible to get any systematic chronology of the rulers of Jaintia except references at random. Jayanta being cut off from the main shrine of Kamakhya in Kamrupa and also from the newly *Janghapitha.* established Griva Kamakhya which was now included within the jurisdiction of Gaur Sylhet, he established another Kamakhya on the south eastern part of his kingdom on the slope of the hill near Kanaighat, and named it *Bama-Jangha pitha* or the Left thigh shrine and the stone emblem was identified as the left thigh of the Supreme Mother from its shape.

Though separated from the main empire of Kamarupa in practice, the three kings of the three kingdoms considered themselves yet as a part of Kamarupa, and designated their kingdoms as *Khanda* Kamarupa. Kamarupa being the most powerful kingdom in the Eastern part of India at the time, her culture and influence in some form or other could not but effect the neighbouring states.

Jayanta's son Joymalla was a great athlete, so-much-so that he found pleasure in allowing an elephant to walk over his chest; and one day *Joymalla,* while trying his strength with a rhino caught fresh from *Bancharu.* the jung'e he met with accidental death. After that, there is mention of one Bancharu who was very keen in improving the

forests of his kingdom by planting trees and plants of commercial value : for, the forest produce of Jainta was one of the greatest attractions of the traders that flocked to the port of Sylhet from different parts of India. Honey, *Tejpat*, orange and Agarú were cultivated in abundance at this time.

About this time, Buddhist Tantricism had penetrated into Kamrupa and Bengal, and it easily found its way into Jainta over the hills from Kamrupa and through the port town of Sylhet. The latter place being a congested port where people from different parts of India and specially from Bengal flocked and stayed for business. The Buddhist merchants established a temple in that port town and installed a beautiful metal image of Buddha which they named as Shillo-Lokenath. Griva Kamakhya was named as Griva Kali, and the Jangha Kamakhya was named as Jangha Kali. Sylhet port became a hot bed of Buddhist Tantrics, and in their sacred books they mentioned this place as of immense sanctity second only to Kamakhya in Kamrupa. Bancharu was influenced greatly by this cult and he introduced the sacrifice of human beings in the shrine of Jangha Kali.

Then there is mention of Kamadeva who was a great patron of Sanskrit learning, so-much-so that he got from his friend Bhojo Varma Deva of East Bengal (1090 A. D.) a Sanskrit scholar Kaviraj Pandit and got an epic Vijay-Raghabia composed for him. Kamadeva's son Bhimbál reigned only for a short period while an uprising amongst some of the vassal rulers of the hill area dragged him into a war in which unfortunately he was badly defeated. To shun the disgrace, he left the country in disguise while others thought that he was murdered. His throne was usurped by his Brahmin minister Kedāreswar Rai. This was in about 1120-30 A. D. when the political situation in Kamarupa was in a melting pot.

The family of the Brahmin kings who came originally either from Kamarupa or very likely from East Bengal ruled for five generations quite ably and peacefully introducing all ideas and customs of the Hindu religion amongst the hill people. Admixture of blood was naturally not stayed, and along with a mixed culture by fusion of the religious ideas and customs of the two people a mixed race also developed side by side.

The last king Jayanta Rai had only a daughter Jayanti, and she was married to Landavar the son of the Brahmin minister Chandivar. This