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GENESIS OF PRATAPGARH KINGDOM IN PRESENT KARIMGANJ DISTRICT OF ASSAM GERMANE TO MEDIIEVAL PERIOD FROM 13TH CENTURY TO 18TH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

ELIZABETH I – “ For, what is a family without a steward, a ship without a pilot, a flock without a shepherd, a body without a head, the same, I think, is a kingdom without the health and safety of a good monarch. “

The term “ kingdom “ refers to a unit / domain/region having specific area ruled by a sovereign ruler. The domain of a kingdom also include its subjects over which the ruler has jurisdiction and influence over them. The ancient and medieval kingdom of India left its mark in our history, the legacy of which can be felt even today. Kingdoms like – Mauryan, Gupta, Sultanate, Mughals covers a significant part in our historical book. Assam is not an exceptional from these. Ahom kingdom, Kachari kingdom, Pratapgarh kingdom and many others left a lasting impression in the history of Assam. It can be assumed that the present concept “ state “ draws its legacy from the term “ kingdom”.

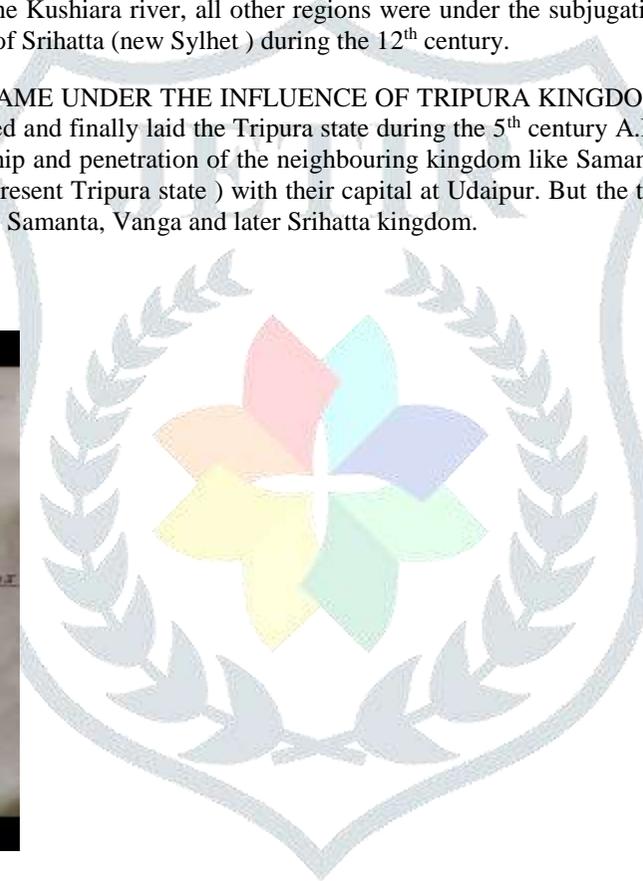
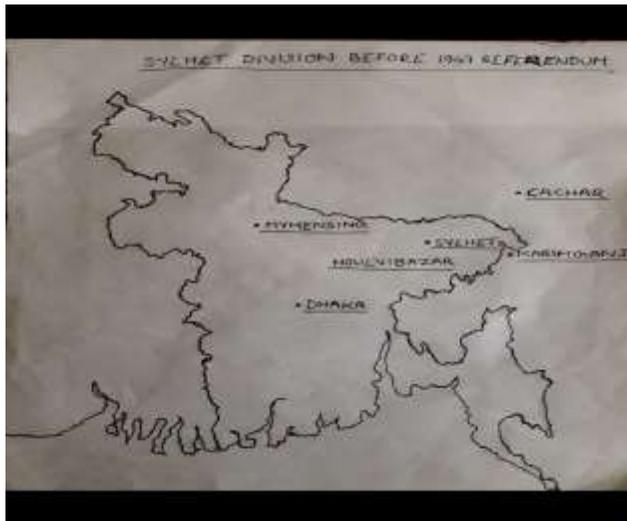
Keywords – kingdom, ruler, subject, monarch, king, region.

INTRODUCTION

The history of Barak valley covers a golden era as this region viewed the existence of plethora of kingdoms in its heart. Barak valley or Cachar witness the existence of renowned kingdoms like Kachari kingdom in Khaspur (Cachar) and Pratapgarh kingdom (present Patharkandi). During the British period, the present Karimganj district was ruled by the Bengal Sultanate and was a part of Sylhet region. Whereas the present Cachar and Hailakandi district were under the Kachari kingdom. Among all the regions of Karimganj district, the present Patharkandi left a lasting impression in the history of Assam as it represented one of the renowned kingdom of Karimganj district known as "Pratapgarh kingdom". In short, during the medieval period of Assam, the present Patharkandi region, which is situated to the south of Karimganj district was known as "Pratapgarh" and was cognized as "Pratapgarh kingdom".

It has been assumed that except the northern region of the Kushiara river, all other regions were under the subjugation of Tripura kingdom during the latter part of the 15th century. This probably happened after the dissemination of Srihatta (new Sylhet) during the 12th century.

[HOW CACHAR (KARIMGANJ SUBDIVISION) CAME UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF TRIPURA KINGDOM – The entire Cachar (Karimganj subdivision, Tripura and Sylhet) region were ruled by kacharis who dominated and finally laid the Tripura state during the 5th century A.D. But during the 7th century A.D, the Tripura boundary was pushed out of the Barak valley due to the overlordship and penetration of the neighbouring kingdom like Samanta, Harikela and most noticeably Kamarupa. Later, the Tripuras started ruling over the hill tracts of Tipperah (present Tripura state) with their capital at Udaipur. But the tripuris could not regain their prowess over Barak valley till 12th century as their track was dominated and ruled by Samanta, Vanga and later Srihatta kingdom.



The origin of Karimganj goes back to Kachari king (a part of the Kamrup kingdom) who settled finally in Barak valley. Many stories have been attributed regarding the existence of the word "Karimganj". Some believed that as the Karimganj subdivision was a part of the Sylhet division which was ruled by the Bengal Sultan, some Bengalis might have arrived from Sylhet and provided the name Karimganj. While some other scholars believed that word "Karimganj" came into existence from the word "Karim" who might be one of the 360 saints of Shah Jalal of Sylhet. He might have settled in this region and his disciples, out of gratitude might have entitled this area as Karimganj(Handbook, 2011)



Patharkandi (Karimganj division) was a part of Sylhet region during medieval period, Sylhet during the medieval period included the Sylhet division of Bangladesh and Karimganj region of Assam (India). Patharkandi in Karimganj division before the partition of India was a part of the Sylhet division which was under the Bengal Sultanate and later the great Mughals. Pratapgarh kingdom in Pratapgarh (present Patharkandi) marked the existence of an indomitable kingdom in the history of Barak valley.

Pratapgarh kingdom (1489 – 1700 A.D), a medieval kingdom had been ruled by innumerable Hindu and Muslim chiefs. The present Karimganj district, a part of Tripura state and Sylhet, Cachar, Tripura and Bengal surrounded Pratapgarh as the neighbouring kingdom. It was a medieval kingdom, the real existence of which came in the 15th century during the reign of Malik Pratap



The origin of Pratapgarh kingdom can be attributed to the 15th century with the history of the conquest of Sylhet. After the dissemination of ancient Srihatta (Sylhet) (630-1303 A.D), many petty provincial kingdoms came into existence. Pratapgarh kingdom (1489- 1700 A.D) in Karimganj subdivision (Sylhet) was one of them.

The geographical boundary of Pratapgarh was noteworthy. The western side of Pratapgarh was bounded by Adam Ail or Patharia hill range, the eastern side was bounded by Sarashpur hill and the southern side was bounded by the present Tripura and Mizoram state. In short, the whole region of present Patharkandi and Ratabari including some portions of Karimganj subdivision , Badarpur and Nilambazar region together formed the Pratapgarh kingdom.

The original name of Pratapgarh was " Sonai Kanchanpur " given by the Magadhan rulers or the Kacharis.

[The term “Sonai – Kanchanpur “ was given by the Kacharis as this plain tract of Cachar was linked with Sonai river which was one of the major southbank tributary of the Barak river. The means of communication of the Kachari kings were the rivers like Barak, Longai, Sonai, Sonbeel and many other tributaries. So when the Kacharis brought Cachar under their control and as this Sonai tributary included a part of Cachar district of Assam and a part of state Mizoram, so it can be assumed that the title “Sonai – Kanchanpur “ was given by the Kacharis.](members, 2019)

While some opine that word “ Sonai Kanchanpur” was given by the Magadhan rulers. The chronicles attributed many stories relevant to the ups and downs of this Magadha kingdom. According to these chronicles, this Magadha empire in the later period came to be known as “Sonai Kanchanpur”.

[REASONS FOR COMING OF MAGADHAN RULERS IN TRIPURA AND KARIMGANJ SUBDIVISION (SYLHET)]

- 1) The Pala dynasty overpowered Magadha right from the 12th century A.D. It was Dharmapala (1057 – 1120 A.D) who consolidated his position over Magadha during 12th century A.D.
- 2) As a result, politico – cultural contacts had begun establishing between Magadha and Kamarupa.
- 3) Devapala of Magadha conquered Kamarupa as is ascribed in Monghyr copper plate inscription.
- 4) The practice of “ Tantricism” in Kamarupa provided ample evidence of the presence of Magadhan (Pala) rulers in Kamarupa as the cult of Tantricism was developed by Pala rulers in about 9th century A.D. This was explained by Historian Babu Nanda Lal Dey.(Singh, 2009)
- 5) During Kumarapala (1130 – 1142 A.D)reign, his Prime minister, Vaidya deva of the great Bihar dynasty was made the vassal king of Kamarupa from 1138 A.D.
- 6) It was from 1138 A.D, that should be marked as the end of Pala reign in Kamarupa.

The above reasons provided ample evidence of the presence of Magadhan rulers (Pala dynasty) in Kamarupa (Assam) and as such we can assume that it was during this period that Chatra Singh(Magadhan prince) entered Tripura division and accepted the land as a gift from Tripura king.



In the latter period, a kingdom existed in the south- eastern side of Sonai Kanchanpur located in the Tripura border that came to be known as “Pratapgarh kingdom”. Later this Pratapgarh region came to be found in between Patharkandi and Ratabari region of southern Karimganj region. This “ Sonai Kanchanpur “ was then renamed “Chatachura” after a legendary event. It so happened that a Magadhan prince named Chatra Singh received a land as token from the Maharaja of Tripura in about 1260 A.D. Chatra Singh’s successor was Kanak Singh. During both the ruler’s reign, the region of Pratapgarh was densely forested area with hilly regions. It was located on the south-eastern corner of the Adail and Du- ail ranges (also known as Patharia and Pratapgarh ranges). The Pratapgarh region stretched from Karimganj upto parts of the Lushai hills (also known as Mizo hills which are the mountain ranges ranging in India in Mizoram and Tripura).

During Kanak Singh's reign, Chatachura was renamed Kanakpur. It was during his reign that Pratapgarh's relation with the neighbouring kingdom like Gour, Tripura came to the surface by establishing matrimonial alliance with them. As such he himself married a Tripura prince while his sister named Shantipriya tied the knot with one sibling of the last king of Gour kingdom of Sylhet, Gour Govinda named Garuda of Gour.

Prince Garuda (before 1206 – 1303 A.D) was the son of Govardhan (the 20th king of Gour kingdom of Sylhet) and Apurna and was suppose to be the heir apparent of Gour kingdom. But being a minor during the accession of throne in 1260 A.D , his cousin Gour Govinda ascended the throne of Gour kingdom. During his marriage with Shantipriya, he received as a dowry from Raja Pratap Singh, the area now known as Chapghat situated in eastern Karimganj.

Kanak Singh was latter succeeded by his son Pratap Singh who founded a new town in the Pratapgarh region and so Kanakpur was again renamed as "Pratapgarh ". Thus the name Pratapgarh came into existence under the hindu rulers of Pratapgarh about 200 years ago before the foundation of Pratapgarh kingdom.

The name "Pratapgarh" came into existence from the name "Pratap Singh". The fort of Pratap Singh was situated in a place called "Rajbari ", situated about two miles away from present Patharkandi police station. This Rajbari was considered as the capital of Pratap Singh.

It had been assumed that Pratap Singh had no heir apparent and so after his death his kingdom had turned into jungle. Some confusion regarding the name of the kingdom had been traced by Historian Achut Charan as he found in a paper source "Hastabodh" that both "Pratapgarh" and "Pratabgarh" were written in the source. It indicates that both are pocelonym.

HOW PRATAPGARH CAME UNDER THE DOMINION OF MUSLIM RULE

The Muslim rule in Pratapgarh began in the early 15th century when Sylhet and other neighbouring areas were under the influence of Shah jalal except one region. It is in this region that a Persian noble named Mirza Malik Muhammad Turani started ruling which was happened to be under the dominion of the Maharaja of Tripura, but ruled by some Khasi tribes. (Ahmed, 2016)

Mirza Malik Muhammad Turani was a Persian noble from Iran who came to India during the early 14th century. He came to India in 1398 along with Taimur " the lame ". His family tiff compelled him to leave Iran and migrate to India. But when Taimur left India for Samarqand, he appointed his general Khizr Khan (1414 – 1421) to act as deputy general of Taimur's son and successor, Shah Rukh.

Mirza Malik was directed to move to Bengal by Khizr Khan. Accompanied by huge militiamen, he entered India advancing towards Delhi. As he was not able to establish himself in Delhi, so he willingly moved to Sylhet and inhabited in Deorail (Sylhet division) after the conquest of Sylhet. Malik Turani reached Deorail in Sylhet subdivision that was considered as the land of 360 Aulias, i.e, 360 disciples of Shah Jalal. He might have defeated the local community of Deorail and started living there and then eventually settling in the present Karimganj district. But during his presence in Karimganj subdivision , the area was under the influence of Tripura ruling family ruled by a khasi tribe. This is evident from the inscription written " Raja Maar Dighir. So it can clearly be assumed that before the augmentation of Shah Jalal and Mirza Malik, the region (Deorail) near Barak river was a hindu dominated region.

The legend behind the domination of Pratapgarh by Muslim rule was a marriage proposal conveyed by Malik Turani to Pura Raja, the then local khasi governor of Pratapgarh. It so happened that Pura Raja's beautiful daughter Umavati stole the eyeball of Turani while she was bathing in a river. Mesmerised by her beauty and love, Turani sent the marriage proposal to his father. But Pura Raja was reluctant to give his daughter 's hand to a Muslim ruler and so rejected his proposal. Infuriated by this rejection, Turani with his militiamen attacked Pura Raja and brought his fort under his control and forced him to accept the marriage proposal. Later due to the absence of heir apparent of Pura Raja, he chose Turani as his successor.

Mirza Malik attacked Pura Raja's residence and without any counterattack, Pura Raja submitted to Mirza Malik. This proved the fact that Pura Raja lacked any kingdom in that region. He might be only a vassal king of Tripura kingdom or an influential ruler of a tribal community. Thus, after becoming the heir apparent of Pura Raja, Deorail and the neighbouring region including Pratapgarh came under muslim domination. Thus Pratapgarh came under the influence of Muslim rule.

Mirza Malik invited the neighbouring supporters to settle in Deorail. So people influxed in Deorail adopting zamindarship under their new ruler Mirza Malik.

In the later period, Mirza Malik was succeeded by his two sons – Bara Malik (eldest) and Shad Malik. Shad Malik was blessed by two sons. The elder son of Shad Malik was succeeded by a son named Malik Kamal Uddin. Malik Kamal Uddin was succeeded by his son Malik Pratap. Thus Malik Pratap was the great – great grandson of Mirza Malik Muhammad.

But the real foundation of Pratapgarh kingdom was laid down by Malik Pratap (the great grandson and heir of the Pratapgarh throne) during the close of 15th century. He was also responsible to free Pratapgarh from the clutches of Tripura. At first, he owned the capital of Pratapgarh (Patharkandi) by marrying the daughter of the then owner of Pratapgarh, Amir Ajfar. It so happened that once young Malik Pratap went for buffalo hunting inside Pratapgarh region in a slum area of Amir Ajfar. He went in and enjoyed the hospitality of Amir Ajfar. Mesmerised by the beauty of Amir Ajfar's daughter, he decided to settle in Pratapgarh , leaving Deorail. Thus started a new phase of kingship in Pratapgarh.

No clear description had been received from any source regarding the true identity of Amir Ajfar..But some evidence like remains of forts in Pratapgarh indicates that Amir Ajfar belonged to a influential community, but his residence were forested area and not a full – fledged flourishing kingdom. After the dissemination of Srihatta, , as is evident from Tamralipti, the Tripura kingdom included Moulvibazar and Karimganj upazilla and the maximum part of Kushiara river. So it can be assumed that Ajfar was not an independent ruler, but a vassal of Tripura kingdom.

Another circumstances that led Amir Ajfar establish himself in Pratapgarh was when Barbak Shah (1459-1474), the Sultan of Bengal started usurping the kingdom in the southern Karimganj (Sylhet), the Pratapgarh kingdom was in a devastated condition. This is evident from the fact that during the year 1463, when the security guard of Barbak Shah started constructing a mosque in a village called Hathkhula situated in the southern side of Asimganj, they brought some inscribed statue from the ruins of Pratap Singh's palace, except the one bearing hindu symbols like swastika, slokas etc.

When Barbak Shah was dominating the southern Karimganj, the southern Asimganj was free from any political development. Taking advantage of the upheaval, Amir Ajfar started residing in the Pratapgarh kingdom.

This is the place where Malik Pratap assumed his kingship and he converted Ajfar's residence into his palace as is evident from the remains of a demolished fort in this region. Amir Ajfar was considered a vassal of Tripura king. Malik Pratap modified the house of Amir Ajfar into a kingdom and led to the construction of a mosque to commemorate his kingship in Pratapgarh.

Malik Pratap got engaged in making his kingdom fully inhabited area and was intended to extend his empire. At this juncture, a political development took place where the Maharaja of Tripura, Dharma Manikya's second son , Pratap Manikya(1487 – 1488 A.D) started war of succession with his elder brother, Dhanya (1490 – 1515 A.D). By extending help to Maharaja Pratap Manikya , a 15th century Maharaja of Tripura in getting the throne, Malik Pratap had an upperhand in Pratapgarh kingdom.

In this family feud between Maharaja Pratap Manikya of Tripura and his elder brother Dhanya which had started from 1489 A.D for the throne of Tripura, Pratap Manikya took military assistance from Malik Pratap and had gained the throne. Taking advantage of this feud, Malik Pratap had already declared himself as an independent ruler of Pratapgarh. Later, in lieu of his assistance, Pratap Manikya granted Pratapgarh as an independent kingdom and recognized Malik Pratap as an independent raja of Pratapgarh. ([https://en.wikipedia.org>wiki](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki))

Two reasons supported Pratap Manikya's granting freedom to Malik Pratap:-

- 1)Pratap Manikya was busy in a war of succession with his younger brother, Dhanya Manikya.
- 2)Pratap Manikya could secure military assistance from Malik Pratap when necessary demanded.

But according to Tripura historical source “ Rajmala “, Pratap Manikya defeated his younger brother Dhanya Manikya and ascended the throne. Some years later, Dhanya Manikya by applying tricks killed Pratap Manikya and ascended the throne.This story was mentioned by Achut Charan Choudhury in his book “Srihattar Itibritta “.

Two stories regarding the accession of Tripura throne was developed during Malik Pratap's reign. However, it was believed that at this critical juncture, Malik Pratap was busy settling in Pratapgarh.

In order to develop amicable relation with Malik Pratap, Pratap Manikya gave his daughter's marriage with Bazid, the grandson of Malik Pratap. Thus, matrimonial alliance was established between Tripura and Pratapgarh. As such, Pratapgarh was established as an independent kingdom and thus freed from the dominion of Tripura.

PRATAPGARH AND BENGAL DISPUTE – Bayazid or Bazid, after ascending throne of Pratapgarh assumed the title of Sultan as he succeeded in defeating the invasion of Kacharis of Maibong which was a tribal monarchical power of medieval Assam. With this defeat, his name and fame reached its zenith which finally gave a boost to his capital's trading activities. His capital became renowned for the production of floral stonework which boosted the trade connection with the neighbouring regions. It has been assumed that perhaps it was during Bazid's reign, that the region's trading activities reached its apex including zamindars, landlords, petty businessmen etc.

When Bazid was enjoying the prowess in this region, a significant development took place in Sylhet which brought Sylhet under the domain of Bazid. During his rule, the Bengali governor of Sylhet, Gahar Khan died. Taking advantage of his death, his two assistant – Subid Ram and Ramdas siphoned a huge amount of government money. Many others also rivalled against Bengal and took shelter under Bazid. The fear of life and the fear of the wrath of Alauddin Hussain Shah (1494 – 1519 A.D), the then Sultan of Bengal, they fled to Pratapgarh. Bazid provided protection to these fugitives and seeing the lack of overlordship in Sylhet, annexed the region with Pratapgarh.

This made Hussain Shah turned his attention towards Pratapgarh. But Hussain Shah wanted to avoid war and so he sent Muhammad Khan (a Jaunpuri servant) and Surwar Khan to Pratapgarh for negotiation.

[Syed Allaiddin Hussain Shah (1494 – 1519), an independent medieval kingdom of Bengal and the founder of the Hussain Shahi dynasty, was the co – ruler of Bazid. During his reign, the whole Sylhet region was under ‘Kanungo’.]

[The term ‘ Kanungo ‘ came into existence in Bengal during the reign of Syed Allaiddin Hussain Shah, Rukan Khan was sent to rule Sylhet by the order of Hussain Shah. Later, Rukan Khan was succeeded by Gahar Khan Aowari to rule Sylhet division. These administrators who ruled Sylhet came to be known as ‘ Kanungo ‘. In short, the term ‘ Kanungo ‘ referred to the highest ranking officer of land administration of Sylhet.]

[Surwar Khan was a Bengali Hindu named Sarbananda of Sylhet. He converted himself to Muslim and so adopted the name Surwar Khan. He lived in the village Barsala in Sylhet and designated as minister under the Bengal Sultan. He belonged to the political family of Barshala who were considered as Mazumdars of Sylhet.]

Surwar Khan was sent to Bazid by Hussain Shah of Bengal for amicable settlement. But Bazid showed no sign to surrender Sylhet to Hussain Shah. Infuriated with this behaviour, Sarwar Khan defeated Bazid and his allies group, Zamindars of Kanihati and Ita, and Bazid's son Marhamat Khan.

[The Zamindars of Kanihati were actually the Choudhury family of Sylhet region. The title ‘ Choudhury ‘ was granted to one of the zamindar named Nasir-ud-din by the Mughal emperor. The origin of this zamindar family started when a tripuri princess was married to the son of Shah Halim Ad- Din Narnauli, named Abd al – Malik. Shah Halim was an Arab sufi saint who came to Sylhet as the companion of Shah Jalal. Their son Daulat Shah to seek further knowledge left his wife Kani (Kanak Rani) under the shelter of Helimuddin. Thus, the name ‘ Kanakhati ‘ or ‘ Kanihati ‘ came into existence. Daulat Shah's pedigree included his daughter Rajrani, married to Abd al – Malik. Helim uddin's son Abd al-Malik, Abd al – Malik's daughter Bibi Hamira who was married to Shah Mustafa of Chandrapur of Bangladesh who had a son Shah Hasan . Abd al – Malik's second son named Sultan Khan of the village Kaula. Abd al- Malik and his son Dawud Khan built village named Sultanpur and Dawudpur respectively. Dawud Khan's son Bhuiyan Mian who founded a village called ‘ Bhuyian ‘. The Kanihati Pargana in later period was partly ruled by Mian's two sons named – Noor Khan and Qalb - e – Khan. This was termed as ‘ Zamindars of Kanihati ‘.]

[The existence of Ita was relevant to the emergence of Tripura kingdom for the second time after the downfall of Srihatta kingdom. Barak valley before 12th century was under the control of the powerful rulers of Samantata, Vanga and then under the domitable Srihatta kingdom. It was only after the downfall of the Srihatta kingdom in 12th century that Barak valley came under the control of the Tripura kingdom again. This fact is proved by the land grants that was made by a Tripura raja named Dharmadhara in 1195 A.D to one of Nidhipati's descendant. This tract of land was known as Manukulapradesh, later came to be known as ‘ Itapargana ‘. It gained the status of a state named ‘ Ita ‘ when one of the later descendant of Nidhipati named Bhanu Narayan successfully curbed a rebellion and arrested a rebel and led to his imprisonment. The Raja of Tripura presented the award of ‘ Raja of Ita ‘ to him.](Sangma, 1994)

Though Hussain Shah emerged victorious, but he granted Bazid to rule independently in Pratapgarh in lieu of war indemnity in the form of:-

- 1)Bazid denounced the title Sultan.
- 2)Lifted up the dominion on Sylhet and surrendered Sylhet to Hussain Shah of Bengal.
- 3)Bazid paid a tribute including money and elephant to show his subjugation to Hussain Shah of Bengal.
- 4)Surrendered two fugitives namely – Subid Ram and Ramdas.
- 5)Bazid's daughter Lavnyavati was married to Surwar Khan's son, Mir Khan.

While in Sylhet, Surwar was announced as Sylhet's new Governor and his son Mir Khan, as the heir apparent of the sultan of Sylhet. In Pratapgarh, soon after the war, Bazid breathed his last after being defeated in the hands of Hussain Shah of Bengal. Bazid was succeeded by his four sons. But among his four sons, his eldest son was Marhamat Khan who was well – known for his valour.

A small story proved Marhamat Khan's valour when a Kachari (Hirimba , the ancient name of Cachar) king took the advantage of Marhamat Khan's absence in Pratapgarh and attacked his kingdom.

It so happened that Marhamat Khan along with his militiamen left Pratapgarh for Mymensingh to tie the knot with the daughter of a zamindar family in Jangalbari. During his absence, Bazid undertook the responsibility of Pratapgarh along with some trusted soldiers and army men. Taking advantage of Marhamat Khan's absence, Kachari king led an attack on Pratapgarh. But his trusted bodyguards – Udai and Bhudhai along with his soldiers fought valiantly and defeated the Kachari king.

This story reveals the heroism of Marhamat Khan.

Marhamat Khan was succeeded by his four sons and among them, his eldest son, Shamsher Khan succeeded Marhamat Khan to the kingdom of Pratapgarh after his death.

Shamsher Khan was succeeded by his eight sons. A war of succession took place among the eight sons of Shamsher Khan.They divided Pratapgarh kingdom in small mirasdars among themselves. Among them, Ayub Uddin and Aftab Uddin went to the western side of Patharia region and settled themselves. (Choudhury, 1910)

Among all the eight sons of Shamsher Khan, Aftab Uddin, who was considered the most valliant king, succeeded Shamsher Khan to the Pratapgarh kingdom.

PRATAPGARH UNDER MUGHAL DOMINION

During the reign of Jahangir (1605 – 1627 A.D), Pratapgarh came under the strict grip of the Mughals as a police station was established in Bundashil (present Badarpur in Karimganj district) . Even amils were appointed for collecting taxes with stringent measures. It had been assumed that these system was further responsible for the disintegration of Pratapgarh kingdom.

Pratapgarh during the 18th century faced the second Tripura invasion under the rule of Aftab Uddin, the grandson of Marhamat Khan. A controversial issue aroused regarding the identity of Tripura Raja. Historian Achut Charan Choudhury suggested the name Tulsidhaja (after 1730 A.D) as the Kachari Raja, whereas Upendra Guha suggested Tamradhaja (around 1780 A.D) as the Kachari Raja who attacked Pratapgarh during the 18th century.

Infuriated with her husband's death (Tamradhaja);Kamala, the widow of Kachari king led an attack in Pratapgarh kingdom defeating Aftab Uddin. The latter was arrested and many of his siblings were assassinated. The royal treasury of Pratapgarh was robbed. The siblings of Pratapgarh took shelter in the nearby ‘ ‘ Jangalbari ‘ ‘ (Mymensingh) situated in Karimganj upazilla of Kishoreganj district. The reason for moving to Jangalbari was that it was the residence of the wife of Marhamat Khan,i.e, the paternal grandmother of Aftab Uddin.

WHY ZAMINDARI WAS ESTABLISHED IN PRATAPGARH :-

After the Kacharis occupation of Pratapgarh kingdom, the royal family disseminated and Pratapgarh came under the dominion of Kacharis. Thus, it can be assumed that during the early 18th century, kingship started disappearing and zamindarship came into existence. Plethora of factors can be traced for the establishment of zamindarship in Pratapgarh kingdom after the second invasion of Kacharis in Pratapgarh-

- 1)The administrative and military weakness of Kachari kingdom paved the way for the replacement of kingship with zamindarship. This military weakness may be because of combat with the brothers, presence of Pratapgarh kingdom at the outskirts of Tripura, lack of attention to the distant kingdom.
- 2)The siblings of Aftab Uddin again returned back from Jangalbari with the hope of settling again in their ancestral land ‘‘Pratapgarh’’.
- 3)Lack of ability of the siblings of Aftab Uddin to establish their lost kingdom in Pratapgarh.

Among all other siblings of Aftab Uddin, Shakir Uddin and Azmal Uddin existed and the rest of them expired without leaving any natural heir.

Shakir Uddin was blessed with two sons – Sultan Muhammad and Shiraj Uddin. Azmal uddin was succeeded by his only son named Ajfar Muhammad.

At this juncture, among all the siblings of Aftab Uddin, a nephew of his, named Sultan Muhammad took the lead of getting back his ancestral land. Famously known as ‘‘ Ranga Thakur ‘‘ (The Scarlet Lord), for two reasons – 1) his physical appearance and 2)for the following story that had been attached to him- It so happened that Longai river used to pass alongside Sultan Muhammad’s palace. The sailor passing through this Longai river used to sing hilariously while sailing their boat. Frustrated with the high sounding song, Sultan Muhammad’s wife launched a complain against these sailors to her husband. Infuriated with this, Sultan Muhammad got constructed a barricade in Longai river to divert these sailors. These barricade resulted in the diversion of the course of Longai river to the western side(1 ½ miles) away from the kingdom. This place at present is the Kalkalighat of Karimganj district.

The authenticity of this story has been proved by the fact that the diversion route of the ‘‘ Longai river hitherto bears the title ‘‘ Rangar Bhanga ‘‘by the local inhabitants.

But Sultan Muhammad failed to establish independent Pratapgarh kingdom for the following reasons –

- 1)Sultan Muhammad lacked abilities and capabilities to curb out an independent Pratapgarh kingdom from the overlordship of Kacharis.
- 2)Family feud over ancestral property occurred between Sultan Muhammad and his cousin, Ajfar Muhammad. Sultan Muhammad lacked capabilities to prove his upperhand as a result of which Ajfar Muhammad forcibly intrigued the northern part of Pratapgarh. Later, he established zamindarship here and named it ‘Jafargarh’’.

Jafargarh region received its name after the name of its owner Ajfar Muhammad. Ajfar Muhammad had no heir, so he adopted his paternal uncle’s son Shiraj – Uddin as his heir apparent and took him to Jafargarh.It had been apparent that the ‘‘ Choudhury’’ of Jafargarh were the pedigrees of Ajfar Muhammad. Thus it can be assumed that after the death of Bazid, the concept of zamindarship started to take its formal shape.

- 3)Thus, , after the death of Ajfar Muhammad, Jafargarh was inherited by another cousin of Sultan Muhammad named Siraj Uddin Muhammad as Ajfar Muhammad had no heir apparent to succeed his land. After inheriting Jafargarh, he began to run his zamindarship with full-fledged and with total ownership of land.
- 4)The Kachari kingdom lacked interest to further extend the dominion of their empire.
- 5)The descendants of Sultan Muhammad turned themselves to’’ Choudhury’’ acquiring huge tract of their ancestral land.’’ Choudhury ‘‘ indicated the lord of inherited land who emerged as landowners and displayed leadership quality in their entire community.

Sultan Muhammad was succeeded by his son Jaan Muhammad. Jaan Muhammad was succeeded by his son Muhammad Badruddin. During the period of Sultan Muhammad’s successor, Pratapgarh kingdom was in a total devastating stage. They had only their ancestral Pratapgarh. The maintenance of these ancestral Pratapgarh became impossible for them, and so they moved to Hathkhula situated in the northern side of Pratapgarh. They established themselves their as ‘‘ Choudhury’’ and thus choudhury came into existence in the neighbouring area of Pratapgarh.

Thus, it can be assumed that the second Kachari invasion on Pratapgarh kingdom led to the downfall of kingship in Pratapgarh and the emergence of some elite group who inherited their ancestral property, but failed to curb out an independent and domitable Kachari kingdom. This elite group inherited the titles like “ Choudhury “, “ Zamindar “ to display their overlordship over this region .Perhaps the other factors that led to this transitional period may be monetary benefit and security that they received under Permanent Settlement of the British. Here the “ Revolt of Radharam “ should be taken into consideration as this was the turning point in the history of Barak Valley that led to the introduction of various land reforms act in karimganj subdivision (Sylhet), the legacy of which can still be felt in our present land system.

In the later part of the 18th century, the inheritance of Pratapgarh scattered in different branch and either formed a different clan or joined different branch or joined different kingdom. One member of the royal group of Pratapgarh named Muhammad Sani, otherwise known as Parsena Lanjingland Muhamadani / Mangal Ningthou Sayi joined the lordship of Manipur kingdom. As the name indicates, it seemed that his name had got Islamic – Manipuri touch in it. He was mainly responsible for the introduction of Muslim population in the form of “Pangal” clan in Manipur kingdom (present state of Manipur). The Pangals were the Manipuri Muslims, also called Meitei Pangans /Pangahal; found in Manipur, Assam, Tripura, Nagaland and Sylhet. (Ahamad, 2013)

Thus, it can be concluded that Pratapgarh kingdom eventually led to the introduction of zamindarship in Karimganj subdivision (Sylhet). The disintegration of Pratapgarh kingdom exposed commercial activities linking different region and developing socialization and cultural harmony among people. It also led to the introduction of various land revenue act by the government ultimately legalizing all the act to be followed aftermath. In the later period , a portion of Pratapgarh was renamed “ Patharkandi “. Thus Pratapgarh kingdom led to the beginning of a new era in the history of Barak valley.



REMAINS OF PRATAPGARH KINGDOM (PATHARKANDI)



VISIT TO PRATAPGARH (PATHARKANDI)



BRICK HOUSE OF ZAMINDAR AND HISTORIAN ACHUT CHARAN CHOUDHURY OF JAFARGARH (PATHARKANDI)



INTERVIEW WITH ONE OF THE GRANDSON OF ACHUT CHARAN CHOUDHURY IN JAFARGARH (PATHARKANDI)

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