

# Ahom Military Engagements: War, Warfare, and Weapon

Sauradeep Nath

Assam University (A Central University), Department of History, Jadunath Sarkar School of Social Sciences, Silchar-788011, Assam, India  
Email: [sauradeepnath15\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:sauradeepnath15[at]gmail.com)

**Abstract:** *The Ahom ruled over the Brahmaputra Valley between 1228 CE and 1826 CE. During this period, they were engaged in conflict against neighbouring ethnic groups and kingdoms, such as Chutiya, Dimasa, Miri, Dafla, Mughal, etc. In these armed conflicts, they used various military tactics as well as weapons. However, apart from brief references in the literature about war and warfare, there is no comprehensive and chronological account of Ahom's battle since the 13th century CE. Moreover, there is also less information regarding their weapons. Hence, to mitigate the gap, the paper aims to describe Ahom battles between the 13th century CE and 19th century CE, and also identify the Ahom weapons used in these armed conflicts. To meet the objectives, primary sources in the form of chronicles, i.e., Buranji are taken into account, along with weapons preserved in museums across Assam. The collected primary information is then corroborated with the relevant literature that helped to mitigate the problem and extend knowledge of Ahom history.*

**Keywords:** Ahom, Brahmaputra Valley, Military History, Weapon

## 1. Introduction

The Ahom, who were of the Tai ethnicity, came to the *Nam-Ti-Lao* (Brahmaputra) Valley in the 13th century CE under the leadership of Sukapha. In the Brahmaputra Valley, they founded a kingdom called *Mong-Dun-Sun-Kham* ('mong' = country/province + 'dun' = full + 'sun' = garden + 'kham') with *Che-Tam-Doi* (Charaideo) as its capital. Sukapha became the kingdom's first *Chao-Pha* (monarch), and his potentates ruled over the valley till the 19th century CE. During this period, they were engaged in wars against their adversaries, such as the Dimasa, Koch, Chutiya, Mughal, etc., and in these engagements, they utilized different modes of warfare and also weapons, such as swords, spears, firearms, etc.

Previous works on the Ahom war, warfare, and weapons date to the colonial period when British officers, such as Colquhoun (1885), Gait (1905), and Shakespeare (1914) published their works. However, their works were limited, which were addressed in more recent works of Baruah (1885), Kalita (1988), Barpujari (1992; 1994), Gogoi (2006), and Gogoi (2017). Though these works provided an account of the Ahom wars between 1228 CE and 1826 CE, these do not deal with other aspects of warfare, such as the weapons used by the Ahom, battle tactics, etc. Hence, there remains a gap which the author addresses in the paper.

Based on the problems, the study delves with the following objectives—to narrate the Ahom war fought between 1228 CE and 1826 CE in chronological order, to understand the Ahom mode of warfare, and to identify the Ahom weapons used in battles. The author meets the objectives by collecting both primary and secondary information through visits to libraries of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies and the Indian Council of Historical Research (North East Regional Centre). Besides the author also visited the museums across Assam (e.g., Ahom-Tai Museum in Sivasagar, Assam State Museum in Guwahati, District Museum in Mangaldoi, District Museum in Jorhat, District Museum in Tezpur, Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra in

Guwahati, etc.) to understand the tangible evidence that is in form of weapons.

## 2. Ahom War and Warfare

### 2.1. Sukapha to Suhungmung (1228 CE-1539 CE)

Sukapha left *Mongmao* in 1215 CE (Barpujari 1992, p. 51). According to the *Buranjis*, he was accompanied by his family, including three wives, two sons, and one daughter. While the strength of his followers included five *Mong* (province) chiefs, a contingent of 9000 people, 300 horses, and two elephants (Barua 1930, p. 44; Bhuyan 1932, p. 5; Bhuyan 1945, pp. 4-5; Bhuyan 1960, p. 2). During his journey, Sukapha first fought against the villagers of Mogaung, who resisted his advance. Then, after crossing the Khamjang River, Sukapha halted near the Nongyang Lake. According to the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930), Sukapha gave his chiefs orders to fight the local Naga in that region. Thus, the Naga villages of Kharukhu, Pungkang, Tithan, Binglao, Latema, Lanpang, and Taru submitted whereas the villages of Luknam and Luka were destroyed by the Ahom (Barua 1930, p. 45). After the battle with the Naga, Sukapha organized the area into a province, putting it under the charge of *Kang-Khru-Mong*.

Sukapha then ascended the Patkai Hills, where he fought against the Naga of the following villages—Khunkhat, Jakhang, Tengkhram, Papuk, Tangching, and Khuntung. The *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930) mentions the events of the battle in the following way, “A great number of Naga were killed, and many were made captives. Some Naga were cut to pieces, and their flesh cooked. Then the king made a younger brother eat the cooked flesh of his elder brother and a father of his son's. Thus, Sukapha destroyed the Naga villages.”

After crossing the Patkai Hills, and later Namruk River, Sukapha arrived in the Brahmaputra Valley. Here, Sukapha had to contend with the Moran and the Barahi ethnic groups who inhabited the area. The Ahom won over them by

diplomacy and by offering presents to their chiefs. In this way, Sukapha founded the Ahom kingdom and made Charaideo the capital. Sukapha died in 1268 CE and was ascended by his son Suteupha.

According to *Assam Buranji* (Phukan 1962) and the *Satsari Assam Buranji* (Bhuyan 1960), Suteupha (1268 CE-1281 CE) won over the Dimasa through negotiations. Therefore, the Ahom annexed the Dimasa territory up to the *Nam-Deng* (Namdang) River. Gait (1905) also mentions Suteupha's quarrel with the Nara of Mogaung which led the former to send an expedition against the Nara. However, the Nara defeated the Ahom under *Phrang-Mong-Lung* (Burha-Gohain).

During the reign of Subinpha (1281 CE-1293 CE), the *Buranjis* did not refer to any armed conflicts. However, during Sukhangpha's reign (1293 CE-1332 CE), the Ahom were engaged in armed conflict against the *Phang* (Kamata) kingdom, which encompassed the western part of the Kamarupa kingdom (Barua 1933, p. 161; Kalita 1988, p. 38; Acharyya 1966, pp. 72-73). After prolonged conflict, the *Kamateswar* (i.e., the Kamata king) sued for peace by giving his daughter or sister, named Rajani, in marriage to Sukhangpha (Barua 1930, pp. 47-48).

On the death of Sukhangpha (1332 CE-1364 CE), his eldest son Sukhrangpha ascended the throne. During Sukhrangpha's reign, Chao-Pulai, an Ahom prince, and *Thao-Mong-Lung* (Bar-Gohain) conspired against the monarch. According to *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930), the conspirators sought Kamateswar's help, who advanced as far as Saring. However, an armed conflict was averted after the negotiation between Sukhrangpha and Kamateswar.

Gait (1905), as well as Acharyya (1966), suggest that during Sutupha's reign (1364 CE-1376 CE), the Chutiya, whose kingdom lay on the north bank of the Brahmaputra River, came into conflict with the Ahom. In fact, according to both the *Assam Buranji* of Kasinath Tamuli Phukan (1844) and the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930), Sutupha was murdered by the Chutiyaking Sankhadhvaj during a boat race.

Tyao-Khamti (1380 CE-1389 CE), the third son of Sukhangpha, ascended the throne after an interruption of four years. Soon after his accession, the *Buranjis* mentions that Tyao-Khamti sent an expedition against the Chutiyakingdom to avenge the murder of Sutupha. The *Buranjis* further note that the Ahom were victorious in their campaign as the Chutiyaking fled without resistance.

After the demise of Tyao-Khamti in 1389 CE, there was again an interregnum of eight years. Eventually, Sudangpha (1397 CE-1407 CE) ascended the throne in 1397 CE. During his reign, the Nara king of Mogaung, named Shurunpha, sent an expedition under Tashenpau Bar-Gohain (Barua 1930, p. 50). According to the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930), Ahom king Sudangpha marched against the invaders, fought a battle at Tipam, and defeated Tashenpau Bar-Gohain. The *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930) further mentions that Sudangpha sent an expedition against Kamateswar under the command of Tachanbing Bar-Gohain. However, the Kamateswar averted the conflict with the Ahom by seeking

Sudangpha's aid to repulse the Bengal Sultan's invasion of his kingdom (Barua 1933, p. 167). Therefore, Sudangpha ordered Tachanbing Bar-Gohain to assist Kamateswar. The combined forces defeated the Sultan's contingent (Barua 1933, p. 167; Acharyya 1966, p. 80).

During Sujanpha's reign (1407 CE-1422 CE), the *Buranjis* did not refer to any armed conflict. Likewise, during Suphakpha's reign (1422 CE-1439 CE), too, there was no armed conflict. According to the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930), Susenpha (1439 CE-1488 CE) subjugated the Naga of the Tangsu village after their rebellion. The *Buranji* further mentions that Susenpha led an army to fight against the Naga at Baruk where the Nagawere defeated. According to the *Assam Buranji* (Bhuyan 1930), during the reign of Suhanpha (1488 CE-1493 CE), armed conflict with the TangsuNaga resumed. Initially, the Naga routed an Ahom detachment, and its commander, i.e., Bar-Gohain, was killed. Hence, Nangaranga was appointed as the new Bar-Gohain, who later defeated the Naga. He also captured and brought the families of Tangsu, Lephera, and Maupia to the Ahom court.

Suhanpha also fought against the Dimasain 1490 CE. The cause, according to the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930), was the construction of a fort at Tangsu village by the Ahom. Both the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930) and the *Deodhai Assam Buranji* (Bhuyan 1932) describe the armed conflict. Accordingly, the Dimasa defeated the Ahom under Khu-Na-Seng, which compelled Suhanpha to sue for peace with the Dimasa king by offering him a girl named Jekhring who was accompanied by two elephants and twelve slaves. Supimpha (1493 CE-1497 CE) ascended the throne after Suhanpha. The *Buranjis* do not refer to any conflict during his reign.

Suhungmung alias Dihingia Raja (1497 CE-1539 CE) had an eventful career. According to the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930), the ItaniaNaga revolted against the Ahom in 1504 CE. This led Suhungmung to send an Ahom contingent under Nangaranga Bar-Gohain and KhampengBurha-Gohain against the Naga. In the conflict, the Ahom defeated the ItaniaNaga, and thus the latter made peace by offering four elephants and a girl (Barua 1930, p. 54; Bhuyan 1932, p. 13).

In 1512 CE, Suhungmung marched with an army to Habungand annexed it (Barua 1930, p. 54; Bhuyan 1932, p. 13). Next, in 1513 CE, the Ahom-Chutiya conflict broke out. The Chutiya led by King Dhitnarayan marched up to the Dikhow River, where they fought against the Ahom, led by Suhungmung (Barpujari 1992, p. 55). In the battle, the Ahom defeated the Chutiya.

In 1520 CE, the Chutiya again invaded the Ahom territory of Mongkrang. The *Buranji* notes that the Ahom commander Khenmung tried to resist the incursion but was killed. This led the Ahom to advance up to the *Ti-Phau* (Dibru) River in 1522 CE. In the ensuing battle, the Ahom defeated the Chutiya, and thus their kingdom was annexed. The Ahom put *Thao-Mong-Tiora* (Sadiya Khowa Gohain) in charge of the conquered Chutiya territory.

In 1524 CE, according to the *Deodhai Assam Buranji* (Bhuyan 1932), the Nara king of Mogaung, Phuklaimung invaded an Ahom village named Baradeunia and killed many people. Therefore, Suhungmung sent a contingent to fight against the Nara. In the battle near Rarum, the Nara were defeated. Later, a treaty was signed between the two belligerents.

Suhungmung also fought against the Dimasa kingdom on multiple occasions. For instance, Suhungmung sent an expedition under Kan-Seng against the Dimasa in 1524 CE. The Ahom were victorious, enabling them to occupy the region between *Nam-Ti-Ma* (Dhansiri) and Dikhow. Suhungmung sent a second expedition against the Dimasa in 1526 CE. In the battle, the *Buranji* mentions that the Ahom defeated the Dimasa near *Marangki* (Marangi). Suhungmung's third Dimasa expedition was sent in 1531 CE. In the battle that followed, the Ahom defeated the Dimasa led by Detcha. Suhungmung later installed Detchung as the new Dimasa monarch. Yet again, in 1536 CE, Suhungmung launched a fourth expedition against the Dimasa, for Detchung showed signs of disobedience. In the battle, the Ahom defeated the Dimasa, put Detchung to death, and occupied *Che-Din-Chi-Pen* (Dimapur), the Dimasa capital. The occupied Dimasa territory was then placed under *Thao-Mong-Marangki* (Marangi Khowa Gohain). The Dimasa, on the other hand, retreated and founded a new capital at Maibang.

Suhungmung also had to face the invasion of Bengal Generals, named Turbak Khan and Hussain Khan in 1532 CE. After a prolonged battle on multiple fronts, the Ahom defeated Turbak Khan and Hussain Khan, and their slain heads were entombed on Charaideo Hill (Barua 1930, p. 73). In 1535 CE, according to the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930), the Naga villages of Malan, Pangkha, Khaokha, Lukna, Taru, Pahuk, Khamteng, Shiteng, and Shireng contemplated revolt and therefore seized Khamjangia Gohain. Hence, Suhungmung despatched an expedition against the Naga, who were defeated (Bhuyan 1932, pp. 26-27).

## 2.2. Suklenmung to Supatpha (1539 CE-1696 CE)

In 1546 CE, Suklenmung (1539 CE-1552 CE) had to face the Koch expedition under Sukladhvaj alias Chilarai. The Koch advancing through the north bank of the Brahmaputra River reached near the *Tikarai* (Dikrai) River, where the Ahom resisted them. Both the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930) and the *Deodhai Assam Buranji* (Bhuyan 1932) narrate the events of the Ahom-Koch war. Initially, the Ahom faced defeat at the hands of Koch. The Ahom commanders, Shengkungren and Luk Hanan, died while many fled and retreated to Kaliabor. However, in the next battle at Shaola, the Ahom defeated the Koch, who retreated to Kamarupa. In 1547 CE, the Ahom-Koch war resumed again. The Ahom defeated the Koch and occupied their lost territory.

In 1549 CE, Suklenmung sent an expedition against the Banchungia Naga on the pretext of aiding the Banphia Naga against the latter (Barua 1930). The Ahom defeated the Banchungia Naga and collected a war booty, including twenty buffaloes, nine wild cows, and coral beads (Barua 1930, p. 82).

During his reign, Sukhampha alias Khora Raja (1552 CE-1603 CE) fought against the Naga on multiple occasions. For instance, according to the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930) and the *Deodhai Assam Buranji* (Bhuyan 1932), Sukhampha sent an expedition against the Naga of Hatikhok, Iton, Papuk, and Khamteng in 1555 CE. In the battle, the *Buranjis* mention that the Ahom defeated the Naga. Second, in 1571 CE, Naga chiefs Pungban and Pungkhru revolted against the Ahom. Hence, Sukhampha sent another expedition that subjugated the Naga (Barua 1930, p. 91). Third, in 1573 CE the Itania Naga revolted. Hence, an expedition was sent to suppress the rebellion. The Ahom subsequently defeated the Itanias (Barua 1930, p. 92).

Sukhampha faced the Bhuyan twice during his reign. First, in 1560 CE, two Bhuyan chiefs invaded the Ahom (Barua 1930, p. 84). The invaders encamped near the Dikhow River, where the Ahom fought a battle against them. The Ahom defeated the Bhuyan (Barua 1930, p. 84). Second, according to the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930), in 1564 CE, Sukhampha sent an expedition against the Bhela Raja, a Bhuyan chief who was defeated and captured.

Similarly, the Ahom also had to face the Koch on multiple occasions during Sukhampha's reign. The events of the Ahom-Koch conflict are narrated in both the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930) and the *Deodhai Assam Buranji* (Bhuyan 1932). Accordingly, in 1562 CE, the Koch under Tepu and Bukutumlung reached the mouth of the Dikhow River, where a naval battle was fought against the Ahom. Again in 1563 CE, the Koch led by Chilarai came to Dikhowmukh and defeated the Ahom. Sukhampha left his capital *Chehung* (Garhgaon) and retreated to Klangdoi, where he remained for three months. Later, a treaty was concluded, according to which the Koch gained territory up to Narayanpur on the north bank of the Brahmaputra Valley. Another Koch expedition under Tepu took place in 1564 CE. But the Ahom defeated the Koch and killed Tepu.

According to the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930) and the *Deodhai Assam Buranji* (Bhuyan 1932), the Chutiya rebelled in 1564 CE. Hence, Sukhampha sent an expedition under Burha-Gohain, who defeated the Chutiya. According to the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930), the Nara king of Mogaung invaded the Ahom kingdom in 1575 CE. However, Sukhampha averted the conflict by sending gifts of 1000 gold mohar to the Nara. In 1577 CE, the Nara king again invaded the Ahom kingdom. Hence, Sukhampha marched against the Nara, and a battle was fought near the Sessa River. The Ahom defeated the Nara in the battle and collected a war booty (Barua 1930, p. 92; Bhuyan 1932, pp. 39-40).

According to the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930), during the reign of Susengpha alias Pratap Simha (1603 CE-1641 CE), the Ahom moved to the Kapili Valley in 1606 CE, where at multiple fronts, they fought against the Dimasa. Both the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930) and the *Kachari Buranji* (Bhuyan 1936) narrate the events of the conflict.

During Susengpha's reign, the Ahom-Mughal war started. According to the *Buranjis*, conflict broke out due to illegal activities committed by the Mughal merchants on the Ahom

territory. The *Buranjis* further notes that the Ahom arrested some Mughal traders and confiscated their commodities. This led the Mughal *Subahdar* (governor) of Bengal, named Qasim Khan, to send an expedition against the Ahom under Syed Hakkim and Syed Aba Bakr in 1615 CE. The events of the conflict are narrated in the *Buranjis* and *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* (Borah 1936).

In another encounter against the Mughal commander named Mirza Nathan, Susengpha deployed 80,000 men under the command of Hati Barua (Kalita 1988, p. 72). The Ahom-Mughal war resumed again between 1636 CE to 1639 CE. Finally, a treaty concluded in 1639 CE ended the war. The treaty demarcated Barnadi on the north bank of the Brahmaputra River and Asurar Ali on the south bank of the Brahmaputra River as boundaries between the Ahom and the Mughal. Susengpha alias Bhaga Raja (1641 CE-1644 CE) was ascended by his eldest son Surampha. The *Buranjis* do not refer to any armed struggle during his reign.

During the reign of Shuchingpha alias Naria Raja (1644 CE-1648 CE), there occurred two expeditions against the *Chungi* (Dafla). According to the *Assam Buranji* (Bhuyan 1945) and the *Deodhai Assam Buranji* (Bhuyan 1932), the first Ahom expedition against the Dafla occurred in 1646 CE owing to raids committed by the latter on the Ahom territory. The second Ahom expedition, according to the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930), took place in 1648 CE. In their first expedition, the Ahom did not achieve much success, but in the second expedition, the Ahom were victorious.

Sutamla alias Jayadhvaj Simha (1648 CE-1663 CE) sent two expeditions against the Lakma Naga due to raids committed by them. The *Assam Buranji* (Dutta 1938) provides a detailed description of the Naga expedition. A truce was made after the submission of the Naga chiefs who agreed to pay tribute, and in return, the Ahom offered a hill territory to the chief.

Similarly, Sutamla also encountered the Miri in 1655 CE. According to the *Assam Buranji* (Dutta 1938) and the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930), the Miri nullified the arrangement of the *pos* system concluded during Susengpha's reign and raided the Ahom villages. Hence, Sutamla sent an expedition against the Miri. Subsequently, the Miri were defeated and were required to pay annual tribute to the Ahom (Dutta 1938, pp. 9-10).

According to the *Assam Buranji* (Dutta 1938), *Riyaz-us-Salatin* (Salim 1902), and *Maasir-i-Alamgiri* (Khan 1947), Sutamla occupied Kamarupa from the Mughal *Faujdar* Lutfullah Shirazi. Hence, after the accession of Aurangzeb, Mir Jumla was appointed as the *Subahdar* (governor) of Bengal with directives to invade the Ahom kingdom (Sarkar 1916, p. 156). Mir Jumla fought the Ahom on multiple fronts between 1661 CE and 1662 CE, and then occupied Garhgaon, the Ahom capital, in 1662 CE. However, Mir Jumla could not retain his occupied territories. Hence, a treaty was signed between the Ahom and the Mughal in 1663 CE at Ghiladharighat.

According to the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930), the Miri raided the Ahom villages on the north bank of Brahmaputra

Valley in 1665 CE. Hence, an expedition was sent against them by Supungmung alias Chakradhvaj Simha (1663 CE-1669 CE). The Miri were defeated. In 1666 CE, the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930) mentioned that Supungmung sent an expedition against the Banchangia Naga. After a brief resistance, the Naga surrendered to the Ahom and offered tribute to them.

According to the *Assam Buranji* (Dutta 1938) and the *Kamrupar Buranji* (Bhuyan 1930), Supungmung also fought against the Mughal. In 1667 CE, the Ahom advancing towards Kamarupa occupied Bahbari and Itakhuli. Later, the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb sent Raja Ram Singh against the Ahom (Bhattacharya 1929, p. 367). In the ensuing conflict, the Ahom, after an initial setback at Alaboi, won over the Mughal at Saraighat in 1671 CE. (Kalita 1988, pp. 100-107).

During the reign of Sunyatpha alias Udayaditya Simha (1669 CE-1673 CE), war with the Mughal under Raja Ram Singh continued. According to the *Buranjis*, after a series of land and naval battles between the Ahom and the Mughal, Raja Ram Singh retreated to Rangamati. The *Buranjis* also mention that Sunyatpha sent an expedition under *Phu-Ke-Lung* (Bar Barua) against the Dafla, who had not only raided a village but also refused to pay tribute. However, the Ahom expedition failed. Moreover, according to the *Assam Buranji* (Dutta 1938), Sunyatpha also sent an expedition against the Miri, who were defeated.

According to the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930), during Suklanpha's brief reign (1673 CE-1675 CE), an expedition was sent against the Chutiya and the Miri. Both the Chutiya and the Miri submitted to the Ahom by paying tribute. Between the reign of Suhungand Sulikpha (1675 CE-1681 CE), there isn't any reference to the war in the *Buranjis*. During this period, according to the *Assam Buranji* (Bhuyan 1945), the Ahom court was filled with ministerial intrigue and conspiracy.

According to the *Tungkhungia Buranji* (Bhuyan 1933), Supatpha alias Gadadhar Simha (1681 CE-1696 CE), after consulting with Burha-Gohain, Bar-Gohain, *Seng-Lung* (Barpatra Gohain), *Phu-Kan* (Phukan), and other officers, decided to attack the Mughal at Kamarupa. In a series of battles that followed, the Ahom occupied Kamarupa while the Mughal *Faujdar* Mansur Khan fled beyond the *Manah* (Manas) River (Bhuyan 1933, p. 17).

The *Tungkhungia Buranji* (Bhuyan 1933) mentions that the Miri killed two hundred Ahom along with the family of Sadiya Khowa Gohain. Hence, Supatpha sent an expedition under Moupia Phukan against the Miri in 1683 CE. The Miri were subjugated and had to pay tribute. Supatpha also sent two expeditions against the Naga (Bhuyan 1933, pp. 26-27). The first expedition was against the Namchang Naga and the second expedition was against the Naga of Doyang (Barua 1930, pp. 267-268). In both the expeditions, the Ahom defeated the Naga.

### 2.3. Sukhrungpha to Jogeswar Simha (1696 CE-1825 CE)

Sukhrungpha alias Rudra Simha (1696 CE-1714 CE) sent expeditions against the Dimasa and the *Jayta* (Jaintia) kingdoms. The *Tungkhungia Buranji* (Bhuyan 1933) provides a detailed description of these expeditions. The Dimasa expedition was led by Bar Barua, who marched through the Dhansiri Valley, and Pani Phukan, who marched through the Kapili Valley (Gait 1905, pp. 176-177). The expedition resulted in the occupation of Maibang, the Dimasa capital by the Ahom.

Similarly, the Jaintia expedition was led by Bar Barua, who marched to Jaintiapur (Jaintia capital) through the Kapili Valley, and *Phu-Kan-Lung* (Bar Phukan), who marched via the Jaintia Hills (Gait 1905, p. 180). The Jaintia expedition ended with the submission of the Jaintia king Ram Simha to Sukhrungpha. Sukhrungpha also contemplated invading Bengal, for which he also raised an army (Bhuyan 1933, pp. 38-39). Gait (1905) mentions that in 1717 CE Sutanpha alias Siva Simha (1714 CE-1744 CE) sent an expedition against the Dafla, who once again started raiding. There was no armed conflict during Sunenpha alias Pramata Simha's reign (1744 CE-1751 CE).

In 1758 CE, the Dafla resumed their raids. The Ahom, to prevent the Dafla raids, closed the hill passes, erected forts, and allowed the Dafla to levy *posain* the *Duar* areas (Devi 1968, p. 227). According to the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930), Surampha alias Rajeswar Simha (1751 CE-1769 CE) also sent an expedition against the Miri who had stopped paying tributes. The expedition ended with the surrender of Miri and their offering of tribute.

According to the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930) and the *Tungkhungia Buranji* (Bhuyan 1933), Surampha sent an expedition to aid Raja Jai Singha of *Magalu* (Manipur), who had been ousted from his kingdom by the King of *Mantara* (present-day Myanmar). Shunyeupha alias Lakshmi Simha's reign (1769 CE-1780 CE) was dominated by the internal rebellion against the Moamaria, Khamjania Nara, etc.

The Moamaria rebellion resumed during Shuhitpangpha alias Gaurinath Simha's reign (1780 CE-1795 CE). Hence, Shuhitpangpha appealed to Lumsden, the Collector of Rangpur, for aid. Lumsden sent Captain Welsh, Lieutenant Macgregor, Ensign, John Peter Wade, and six companies of 60 sepoy to Goalpara in 1792 CE (Gait 1905, pp. 206-207). Captain Welsh left the Ahom kingdom in 1794 CE after suppressing the Moamarias and reinstating Shuhitpangpha at Rangpur.

The *Tungkhungia Buranji* (Bhuyan 1933) mentions an insurrection of the Dafla during the reign of Suklingpha alias Kamaleswar Simha (1795 CE-1810 CE). However, the Ahom were able to defeat and subjugate the Dafla. Similarly, the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930) notes that in 1797 CE, the Ahom were able to defeat and suppress the combined forces of Khamti, Nara, Fakial, Miri, Misimi, Muluk, and Abor. Lastly, the *Tungkhungia Buranji* (Bhuyan 1933) also notes an Ahom expedition against the Dimasa king Krishna Chandra. In 1816 CE, the *Mon* (Burmese)

invaded the Ahom kingdom. The Ahom fought against the Burmese, first at Ghiladhari and later near Dihing. But in both instances, the Burmese defeated the Ahom (Barua 1930, pp. 379-381).

According to the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930), Sudinpha alias Chandrakanta Simha (1810 CE-1818 CE) was deposed by intrigue, and in his place, Purandar Simha (1818 CE-1819 CE) was installed as the new Ahom king. Subsequently, the news of Sudinpha's deposition and Badanchandra's murder reached the Burmese court (Bhuyan 1933, p. 207). Hence, the Burmese again invaded the Ahom kingdom. The Ahom fought the Burmese near Nazira but were defeated. Later, the Burmese reinstated Sudinpha as the Ahom king.

Sudinpha (1819 CE-1821 CE), being reinstated by the Burmese, soon became indifferent towards the latter. Hence, the Burmese once again invaded the Ahom kingdom. Sudinpha tried to resist the invasion but was defeated by Mingyimaha Tilowa (Lahiri 1954, p. 11). Sudinpha then left and took refuge in Bengal. The Burmese thus occupied the Brahmaputra Valley. According to the *Tungkhungia Buranji* (Bhuyan 1933), the Burmese installed Jogeswar Simha (1821 CE-1825 CE) as the new Ahom king who ruled as a puppet king.

### 3. Ahom Weapon

The Ahom used different types of weapons including swords, such as *Hengdang* (curved sword), etc.; spears, such as *Jathi* (flat spear), *Barsha* (leaf-shaped spear), *Khapor* (multi-barbed spear), etc.; and *Da* (chopper), such as *Nakoi-da*, *Shikara-da*, etc.; cannons, such as *Hatimuria*, *Baghura*, etc.; and hand cannons, such as *Ramchanggi*, *Jambur*, etc. These weapons are preserved and displayed in Assam State Museum in Guwahati, Ahom Tai Museum in Sivasagar, District Museum in Jorhat, District Museum in Mangaldoi, District Museum in Tezpur, District Museum in Dibrugarh, and Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra in Guwahati.

The Ahom swords are usually curved and single-edged and its hilt is either made of wood or horn. Among the swords, the Ahom regarded *Hengdang* as the most prestigious for its usage was restricted to nobility and high-ranking officials. It is a single-edged curved sword, the blade of which has an upswept tip, and its long circular hilt is almost of equal length to its blade. Likewise, the Ahom used a wide variety of *Da* or chopper, such as *Nakoi-da*, *Mit-da*, *Nara-da*, *Kopi-da*, *Mechi-da*, *Khangara-da*, *Shikara-da*, *Bolikota-da*, etc. The Ahom forged some of these while others were procured as tributes (Phukan 1973: 88-92). Spear was also an integral part of the Ahom edged weaponry. The Ahom spears were—*Jathi*, *Jong*, *Pacha*, *Duta*, *Ballam*, *Baru*, *Barsha*, *Xel* (barbed spear), *Khapor*, *Xul* (rod-spear), etc. The earliest usage of the spear is traced back to the first Ahom monarch Sukapha, who, along with sword, shield, and bow, carried a spear (Bhuyan 1945, pp. 4-5; Bhuyan 1960, p. 2).

According to the literature the Ahom used three types of firearms. These are—heavy artillery, i.e., *Bortop* or cannon, light artillery, i.e., *Hilloi* or hand cannon, and a rocket named *Chandraban*. The literature mentions five types of cannons, such as *Hatimuria*, *Baghura*, *Tubuki*, *Biagom*, and

*Mithaholong*; and eleven types of hand cannon, such as *Jambur*, *Gathia*, *Pohulorgi*, *Saru-hatnalia*, *Ramchangi*, *Kamayam*, *Jamur*, *Tow*, *Kachai*, *Khoka*, and *Bachadari*. The Ahom also used different types of shields, such as *Dhal*, *Baru*, and *Phar*. The *Dhal* was made of buffalo hide or rhinoceros' skin while *Baru* and *Phar* were made of bamboo and cane.



**Figure 1:** Ahom Weapons (a) Hengdang in Assam State Museum, Guwahati; (b) Shikara-da in District Museum, Mangaldoi; (c) Spear in District Museum, Jorhat; (d) Cannon in Assam State Museum, Guwahati; (e) Shield in Assam State Museum, Guwahati

#### 4. Conclusion

The paper succeeds in fulfilling its objectives of providing a descriptive and chronological account of the Ahom war and warfare based on the Ahom chronicles, i.e., the *Buranji*. The paper elicits that the Ahom resorted to war when diplomacy failed. Initially, the Ahom preferred diplomacy to subdue the ethnic groups, such as the Moran and the Barahi. Moreover, once the kingdom was founded Sukapha sent emissaries to make diplomatic ties with the Dimasa kingdom and others. Yet, the consolidation of the Ahom kingdom eventually led to expansion of the same which resulted in confrontation and war with neighbouring ethnic groups and kingdoms. Thus, the paper highlights the Ahom military engagement against multiple adversaries, such as the Dimasa Kingdom, Chutiya Kingdom, Koch Kingdom, Jaintia Kingdom, and Mughal Empire; and ethnic groups, such as the Miri, Naga, Dafla, Nara, etc. In the process, the paper also meets its other objective of enumerating the Ahom weapons preserved and displayed in museums across Assam. The Ahom weapons are found in the following museums in Assam—Assam State Museum in Guwahati, Ahom Tai Museum in Sivasagar, District Museum in Jorhat, District Museum in Mangaldoi, District Museum in Tezpur, District Museum in Dibrugarh, and Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra in Guwahati. The paper also notices that apart from forging their weapons, the Ahom also acquired these as tribute and war booty.

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