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The Konch Kingdom: It's Role in the Historical Development of Assam.

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Abstract:

Konch was come from the dynasty of Haria Mondal. During the medieval age the kingdom of Konch was famous for their dignity. They played a significant contribution in the development of greater Assam as a state and as well as the Assamese society. They ruled in the parts of greater Indian subcontinent and that falls in present some parts Assam and the some parts of West Bengal. After the decaying of Kamrupa which was ruled by Baro-Bhunyas the powerful king who was known Biswa Singha also known as Bisu had been established power and the kingdom of Kamata. Since then they had been able to influence the culture of Assamese society. During the time 16th and 17th centuries this dynasty could able to play a pivotal role in the formation of greater Assamese society. They had played significant force in the formation of social, political, cultural and economic landscape of Assam and the neighboring states at that time. Realizing the importance of the topic it is intended to formulate a brief description on the subject within its very limit. The whole process of the preparation of this paper is to be completed by applying historical method of study.

Keywords: *Assamese Society, Biswa Singha, Dynasty, Kamata, Konch Kingdom etc.*

1. Introduction:

The Konch originated from the eastern parts of Himalayas and in the early part of 16th century they migrated to some plain parts of the Assam and North Bengal. They established a kingdom in the some parts Assam and the some parts of West Bengal during that period. The founder of the kingdom was Biswa Singha. He reigned from 1515 AC to 1540 AC. He was basically known his charismatic leadership. He could able to unite various Konch clans and other local tribes survived at that time in these regions. During this period there prevailed competition in order to achieved political power by the chieftains and the small rulers of that provinces.

The kingdom of Konch initially started in the province of Konch Bihar which is at present falls in West Bengal. The king Biswa Singha with his dignified invasion could able to expound the territory of Konch Kingdom within a very short period. With a combination of military conquests and strategic alliances, King Biswa Singha could able to submerge a number of vast region within his kingdom. His track of land expanded up to the some parts of West Assam, Bengal and Bhutan under his rule. He was very intelligent in the rule and reform of policy and administration. Due to his initiation of centralized system of governance and codification of laws laid the milestone of stable and prosperous kingdom.

2. Objectives:

As it is said that Konch kingdom are one of the influential governance during the medieval period. They could achieve reputation from the surrounding provinces and could able to form powerful state within a limited period. During this short period of time they could able to draw attention and play role in all aspect of socio-political and cultural lives of the people lived in the region. In that context this whole paper will be guided by the following stated objectives.

- a. To draw a brief picture of the emergence and development of socio-political aspects of the Konch kingdom.
- b. To find out the policies and strategies that adopted by the rulers that could able to form a great kingdom and the influences on the greater Assamese society.

3. Methodology:

The topic of the identified paper directly related with historical events and the relevant data would be found only historical literatures. In those circumstances this paper will be completed by adopting historical method of study. The relevant data will be collected from the historical books published by reliable publisher and authors and also from the reliable web pages published in various websites. For instance, this paper will be completed only using the secondary data.

4. Analysis:

The whole paper will be discussed on the following heads.

4.1 Emergence of Konch Kingdom:

Till the time of 12 th century, there was a dynasty named as Pala at Kamrupa a historical kingdom of Assam. After the fall of Pala Dynasty a new ruler Kamrupa nagara known as Sandhya moved his capital in to present day North Bengal in the mid of 13 th century. This new domain was known as Kamata Kingdom. After the fall of the Palad dynasty of Kamrupa, the kingdom fractured into different domains in the 12th century. Sandhya, a ruler of Kamarupanagara falls in present-day North Guwahati moved his capital further

west to present-day North Bengal in the middle of the 13th century and the domain he ruled over came to be called Kamrupa kingdom. The buffer region, between the eastern kingdoms and Kamata was the domain of the Baro-Bhuyans chieftains. Alauddin Hussain Shah of Gaur removed Nilambar of the Khen dynasty in 1498, occupied and placed his son Danyal Husayn in charge. Within a few years the Baro-Bhuyans led by one Harup Narayan of the Brahmaputra valley defeated, captured, and executed Daniyal, and the region lapsed into Bhuyan confederate rule.

4.2 Emergence of the Koch power:

It is, from this study known that a number of independent Konch tribes united under a leader named Hajo, who occupied Rangpur and Kamrupa. The Konches, spreading towards the southern plains, were able to alliance with other tribal groups. Among various factors, the Jhum cultivation was one of the main. The shift from Jhum cultivation to settled cultivation and the breakdown of tribal clan-based relations are given as factors that contributed to the growth of Koch power.

Alliance was one of other factor which was also helped in the growth of Koch power at that time. As part of these alliances Hajo's daughter Hira married Hariya Mandal, a member of the Mech tribe from Chiknagram in present-day Kokrajhar district though these ethnic identities are difficult to discern since there were frequent intermarriages. Haria and Hira gave birth Bisu. He acquired the political legacy of his grandfather Hajo and established himself as the chief of the eastern branch of the Koches in the Khuntaghat region which was falls at the present day Kokrajhar district of Assam. It is thought that Bisu fought under the leadership of the Bhuyans as a landlord against the occupation of Kamata Kingdom by Alauddin Husain Shah and thus learned their military techniques.

4.3 Socio-Political Expansion and Policies:

The ancient history of Cooch Behar has to be sought in the history of Assam. In early times the territory was known as Pragjyotisha, which is mentioned in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. It appears that the western part of the original territory of Pragjyotisha came to be known as Kamarupa in later times. Kamarupa remained under the sovereignty of the Guptas and Palas for some time. Although, Kamarupa was conquered by Muslim Army in A.D.1498, but they could not keep the kingdom for long. After the expulsion of the Muslim army the Kamta kingdom was engulfed in anarchy. During that period, rise of Koch king started.

Koch kingdom was specially expunded during the late 16th century. King Viswasimha assumed the title of Kamteshwar. He died in 1533 and was succeeded by his second son Naranarayan, who was also known as Mallanarayan, after a civil war with Nar Singh who fled to Morung and then to Bhutan. Narnarayan died in 1584 and was succeeded by his son Lakshminarayan who died in 1627. Lakshminarayan was succeeded by his son Birnarayan. In his later years, he had appointed one of his sons Mahinarayan to be

Nazir- deo. Birnarayan died in 1632 and was succeeded by his son Prannarayan who reigned till 1666. He constructed or repaired the temple of Baneshwar. Modnarayan, From his reign the influence of Bhutan on Cooch Behar started. He died in 1680 without a male heir. In that situation Vasudevnarayan, the third son of Prannarayan was placed on the throne. He was killed in a skirmish. Then, Mahindranarayan, the great-grandson of Prannarayan was placed on throne. With the death of Mahindranarayan, Rupnarayan came into the power. After a reign of 21 years he died in 1714. His son, Upendranarayan remained till 1763. The boy Devendranarayan was placed as king under the guardianship of Nazir Lalitnarayan. In 1765 Dhairyendranarayan, the son of Kharganarayan the brother of Upendranarayan was placed on throne. The influence of the Bhutias had increased so much that an office of Bhutan was permanently stationed at Cooch Behar with an army. In later years he was kept in confinement by the Bhutan. His son Dharendranarayan was installed on throne. The East Company was watching with concern the growing power of Bhutias close to their borders. The appeal for help by Nazir was admitted by the company. On April 5, 1773, the treaty between the young Maharaja Dharendranarayan and the East India Company was finalized. Thereafter a peace was concluded between Bhutan and East India Company on April 25, 1774, in consequences of which Dhairyendranarayan was released from captivity. Dharendranarayan died in 1775 and thereafter Dhairyendranarayan took over second time. He died in 1780, leaving his only heir Harendranarayan. Narendranarayan succeeded him after his death. In 1859 a topographical survey of Cooch Behar was made by J.G.Pemberton. Nripendranarayan (one year old) succeeded to the throne of his father in 1863. During his minority the charge of the administration was placed in the hands of a commissioner appointed by the Governor. From that reign the administration of Cooch Behar entered in Modern phase. The first Commissioner was Colonel J.C.Haughton.

The modernization of the administration started by the Commissioners was continued by the Maharaja after assumption of power. On March 6, 1878, Maharaja Nripendranarayan was married to Smt. Sunity Devi, daughter of Keshab Chandra Sen, the Brahma reformer. In 1887 the construction of new palace was completed. Maharaja Nripendranarayan died in 1911 and was succeeded by his eldest son Rajarajendranarayan. He died in 1913 and was succeeded by his brother Jitendranarayan. He married Smt. Indira Devi, daughter of Gaekwad of Baroda. He died in 1921 and succeeded by his minor son Jagaddipendranarayan. He was the last Maharaja of the Cooch Behar. The Instrument of Accession was signed and as a result Cooch Behar was transferred to India. The transfer of the Administration to the government of India took place on the 12th day of September 1949, from which date Cooch Behar was ruled as a Chief Commissioner's Province by Chief Commissioner appointed by the government of India. By an order under section 290A of the Government of India ACT, 1935, Cooch Behar was transferred and merged with the province of West Bengal on 1st January 1950. Since then Cooch Behar is being administered as a district of West Bengal.

In the beginning, the capital of this kingdom was not static and became stable only when the same was shifted to Cooch Behar. The territory of Cooch Behar was known as 'Kamta' even during the period of

Maharaja Viswa Singha and his son Maharaja Nara-Narayan. The Mughal forces grabbed certain portion of the 'Kamta' kingdom in the middle of the 17th century AD. Later on the accounts of Badshanama, Shah-Jahana, Tarikh-I-Assam and the Alamgirnama ascribed this territory as Cooch Behar. It is, therefore, very much apparent that the 'Koch' kingdom was known as 'Kamta' even during the middle of the 17th century AD when the Koch kings like Maharaja Viswa Singh, Maharaja Nara Narayan and Maharaja Pran Narayan used the title 'Kamteswar' for themselves. The valor of the 'Koch' kings is known best by the prides of Maharaja Nara Narayan. He has issued his own coins.

The history of Cooch Behar dates back to the period of the Pala-Senas already said. These include sculptures, coins of the Sultanate and the Mughal Periods, temples, mosques of the mediaeval and late mediaeval period. Of the ancient remains, mention may be made of the Rajpat of Gossanimari, Siva Temple of Banerwar and the Palace of Cooch Behar. It is traditionally believed that the huge mound of Rajpat of the Gossanimari village at a distance of 13 kilometer to the west of Dinhata Police Station marks the site of the ancient capital of 'Kamtapur' of the 'Khen' kings.

5.0 Conclusion:

The Koch Kingdom adopted Hinduism, with Biswa Singha claiming Kshatriya status, although Hinduization was slower among lower strata. To legitimize their rule, the Koch kings claimed divine origin, as outlined in various texts. The Koch Kingdom was known for its strong military, enabling expansion and defense against external threats, including the Mughals. The kingdom had a complex administrative structure, with a royal court, ministers, and officials managing various aspects of governance. The Koch Kingdom's economy relied on agriculture, trade, and resource extraction. They also minted coins, using gold, silver, and brass. The Koch Rajbongshi community has a distinct cultural identity, including oral traditions, music, dance, and unique practices like keeping parrots as pets. As it is said that, Konch were an influential race during the period of medieval age. The Koch Kingdom was known for its strong military, enabling expansion and defense against external threats, including the Mughals. Moreover, they were played a significant role in the socio-political and cultural aspects of Assamese society at that time.

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