

Chapter : 5

Beginning of the British Administration in Assam

HISTORY

FIND OUT CORRECT ANSWER :

Q.1: The Jaintia king Rajendra Singh/Govinda Chandra/Tirot Singh was deported to Sylhet by the British.

Ans: Rajendra Singh.

Q.2: The last Ahom king was Chandra Kanta Sinha/Kamaleswar Sinha/ Purandhar Sinha.

Ans: Purandhar Sinha.

Q.3: Tirot Singh was a patriot of Khasi/Manipuri/Jaintia.

Ans: Khasi.

SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS:

Q.1: To which kingdom Govinda Chandra belonged ?

Ans: Cachar kingdom.

Q.2: Who was Devid Scott ?

Ans: Devid Scott was the agent to the Governor General, North-East Frontier who was assigned the responsibility of the Brahmaputra Valley.

Q.3: Who was the next commissioner to Devid Scott ?

Ans: Cracuoft was temporarily appointed as the commissioner after Devid Scott in 1831. In the year 1832, T.C. Robertson succeeded Cracuoff as the agent to the Governor General, North-East Frontier and Commissioner of Rangpur.

Q.4: Of which kingdom Tirot Singh was the Siyem ?

Ans: Khasi Hills.

Q.5: What was the title of the Muttock king ?

Ans: Barsenapati.

Q.6: According to the instruction of Jenkins who lost the kingdom ?

Ans: According to the instruction of Jenkins, the Ahom king Purandhar Singha lost the kingdom of upper Assam in 1838 due to the non-payment of yearly tribute to the British administration.

Q.7: What were the districts that Jenkins divided into in Lower Assam ?

Ans: Goalpara, Darrang and Kamrup.

Q.8: To whom British gave Rupees 50(fifty only) as pension and occupied Cachar ?

Ans:(The answer to this is not found in the text but since after the death of Tularam,the ruler of North Cachar,his two sons Bakul Ram Barman and Brajanath Barman,ruled Cachar,until dispute arose between them,it could be either of them to whom British paid a pension and occupied Cachar. It may be mentioned that South Cachar was already under the British after the death of king Gobinda Chandra in 1830.)

LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS :

Q.1: How was the revenue policy of Devid Scott ? Discuss.

Ans: Devid Scott,the agent to the Governor General of Bengal for the entire Brahmaputra valley,directed all his energy towards revenue collection and civil administration. The British needed money to invest in the industrial sector in England,and for this purpose they fleeced Indians by taxations. For administrative convenience,the East India Company divided Assam into upper Assam and lower Assam . Scott had a different revenue system for each district.

(i) Revenue system for upper Assam :

(a) In upper Assam, the old paik system was abolished and the paiks were required to pay a sum of rupees three for the cultivated lands, homesteads and gardens. These revenues were collected by the old staff of the Khel.

(b) Janardan Barbarua, an efficient high official of Ahom times, was assigned the general management of revenue assisted by Hazarika, Saikia and Bora.

(c) Later the kheldars were appointed to collect revenue in their respective places. Thereafter, districts were divided into mauzas and officers collected revenue.

(ii) Revenue system for lower Assam :

(a) In Lower Assam, the 'pargana' land division system was retained.

(b) Each pargana was placed under the charge of a Choudhury and the task of revenue collection was designated to Sherastadar, Tahbuldar, Patowaris, Thakurias.

(c) A separate unit comprising Nagaon and Raha was set up for collection of revenues, and this unit was placed under Gauhati jurisdiction.

(iii) Imposition of new taxes:

(a) Professional tax, on weavers, goldsmiths, fishermen, brassworkers, etc. was imposed.

(b) Taxes on rent free lands like Devotter, Brahmatter and Dharmottar was also imposed and half of the tax collected from these lands was called contribution.

(c) Taxes were implemented in some places on the basis of survey of land made under the supervision of Captain Matthews. The lands were classified as basti land, arable land, barren land, etc.

(d) Heavy tax was imposed on the opium cultivators.

(e) Tax of rupees two (gadhan) was imposed on each paik for which he received three puras of land (gamati).

(f) Each male had to pay poll tax levied on number of ploughs which was named poll tax or paik tax or plough tax in Kamrup, mess-pots in Darrang and capitation tax in Nagaon.

Q.2: What steps were adopted in the matters of judiciary during the time of Devid Scott ?

Ans: Devid Scott, the agent of the Governor General for the whole Eastern Frontier, was in charge of administration, revenue, civil and criminal justice, and he was the chief of police as well.

To maintain law and order in the Brahmaputra valley, David Scott adopted following steps in the matters of judiciary.

(i) Panchayats were formed comprising local people for the solution of civil and criminal disputes.

(ii) In case of dissatisfaction with the verdict of the Panchayat, one could appeal to the Assistants of the Commissioner.

(iii) Important cases would be tried by the Assistants of the Commissioner and the Panchayat.

(iv) Important civil cases in Upper Assam were tried by Lombodar Barphukan.

(v) Criminal cases were tried by the junior commissioner.

(vi) One criminal court and two civil courts were established in lower Assam.

Q.3: How was the revenue administration of Robertson ?

Ans: In 1832, T.C. Robertson was appointed as the agent to the Governor General and Commissioner of Assam. He was a man of fact, prudence and sound judgement. In the revenue system, he brought radical changes and made various reforms, some of which are outlined below:

(a) Imposed land revenue tax on the basis of the quality and quantity of land.

(b) Initiated a system of issuing pattas to the cultivators.

(c) Asked the ryots to pay land tax and an additional capitation tax on head in Nowgaon, on hearth in Darrang and on house in Kamrup, in addition to land tax.

(d) Checked oppressive exactions by collectors, Robertson assembled particulars of land, forest land, households, etc. and imposed tax accordingly.

(e) Issued receipts of taxes paid to the respective ryots.

(f) Kept copies of all records for future reference in collector's office.

(g) The ryots benefitted by the revenue reforms of Robertson.

Q.4: What were the steps adopted by Major Jenkins regarding the welfare of Assam ?

Ans: Captain Jenkins was the fourth administrator or commissioner of Assam who succeeded T.C. Robertson in April 1834. He was an able administrator and played an important role in the history of the British Colonial

rule in Assam. He made various arrangements of administrative convenience and welfare of Assam, and is

known to have worked hard for the progress of the region. Following steps were adopted by Major Jenkins regarding welfare of Assam :

- (i) Took initiative in establishing tea, coal and oil industries.
- (ii) Abolished checkpoints that posed hindrance in the free flow of Assam-Bengal trade relations.
- (iii) Assisted in the sailing of first steamship in the Brahmaputra river.
- (iv) Took adequate steps for betterment of transport and road communication.
- (v) Established English medium schools in Gauhati and Sibsagar.

Q.5: How did Jenkins divide Assam into districts ?

Ans: Captain Jenkins, who became the Commissioner and Agent to the Governor General after T.C. Robertson, was an efficient administrator who made various efforts for the smooth administration of the region. During his administration, he divided Assam into different in the following manner:

(i) Districts were classified into small revenue units called Tangani.

(ii) The Tanganis were headed by Phukan, Rajkhowa and Baruah who were assisted by Hazarika, Saikia and Boras.

(iii) Subsequently, Mauzas were formed in place of Tanganis.

(iv) The management of Manzas was entrusted to Mauzadars.

(v) Mauzadars comprise aristocratic people as well as respected common people.

(vi) The district headquarter was shifted to Sivasagar from Jorhat.

Q.6: Who was Tirot Singh ? Why did he rise against the British ?

Ans: Tirot Singh was the tribal Khasi Chief. He was the first tribal Khasi ruler to rebel against the British. The British already had gained control over the entire Brahmaputra valley after concluding the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826. However, the Khasi Hills stood between their occupations in Assam and Sylhet. They wanted to construct a road through this area to connect Guwahati with Sylhet. The Khasi chief, Tirot Singh, permitted them to construct the road from Rani to

Nangkhrou, though other Khasi chief feared British occupation of their territories. Later when the king of Rani and Tirot Singh had a dispute, the British refused to

help the latter and rather stood in support of the king of Rani. Invoked, Tirot Singh attacked the British in 1829 A.D. even killing two British officers. This led to the Anglo-Khasi war and finally Tirot Singh surrendered to the British on June 13, 1833.

WRITE SHORT NOTES ON:

Q.1: Tularam Senapati.

Ans: Tularam Senapati was the General of Gobinda Chandra, the ruler of Cachar. Gobinda Chandra was heirless, so on his death Tularam demanded whole of Cachar from the British. However, the British recognized him only as the king of North Cachar. On Tularam's death Cachar was jointly ruled by his two sons - Nakul Ram Barman and Brajanath Barman.

Q.2: Purandhar Singha.

Ans: Purandhar Singha was the last Ahom king of the Ahom kingdom in Assam. After the first Anglo Burmese war, the British East India Company occupied Assam from Burmese invaders. Finding it difficult to administer an unfamiliar region and sensing discontent among local inhabitants to foreign rule, the British authorities decided to restore upper Assam to one prince of Ahom Dynasty. Purnadhar Sinha was found suitable for this post and

therefore, in April 1833 except Sadiya and Muttok region, the entire upper Assam was formally made over to him, on the condition of yearly tribute of 50,000

rupees. Later in 1838 finding him incompetent and defaulters in payments of revenue, the British formally annexed his kingdom putting an end to the Ahom Dynasty.

Q.3: Tirot Singh.

Ans: Refer to answer of question 6 of textual questions and answers, Long answer type questions.

Q.4: Gomdhar Konwar.

Ans: In 1828 Gomdhar Konwar, a noble of the Ahom royal family, his colleague Dhananjay and his son Harnath Jeuram rose in revolt against the British occupation of their land. Discontent with the British for occupying Assam and for not following their word to reinstate the Ahom king, the Assamese people became rebellious. Thus when British withdrew Martial Law from Assam and the soldiers were shifted, Gomdhar Konwar saw this as an opportunity and declared himself as the king (Swargadeo) of Assam. This led to a battle between Gomdhar Konwar and the British. Finally Konwar was arrested and sentenced to imprisonment for seven years in Rongpur. He escaped from jail and fled to Naga Hills where he was recaptured and sent back to a jail in Rongpur. What happened to him after completion of the jail term of seven years is not known.

Q.5: Occupation of Singpho kingdom by the British.

Ans: The region between the plains of the river No-Dihing to the east of Muttok kingdom and the river Tengapani was recognised as the Singpho kingdom. The chief of the Singpho was given the title Gaum. The Singpho kingdom was annexed by the British in the following manner.

- (i) The Singpho signed a subsidiary treaty with the British by which they came under British Rule.
- (ii) In the treaty, they agreed to inform the British about the enemies entering from the east.
- (iii) Influenced by Ahom nobility, the Singphos took arms against the British.
- (iv) Captain Neutville suppressed the revolt.

Q.6: British occupation of Jayantia kingdom.

Ans: Rajendra Singh was the ruler of Jayantia kingdom. He signed a treaty with the British and maintained good relationship with them. However, he did not provide assistance to the British during Anglo-Burmese war. The Jayantia kingdom was occupied in the following ways :

(i) The Jayantia made inroads into British territory through Jayantia Pargana.

(ii) The British threatened to invade the Jayantia kingdom.

(iii) Jayantia kingdom was occupied by Captain Lister in 1835.

(iv) He appointed a political agent to look after Jayantia territory.

(v) Raje ndra Singh surrendered and was deported to Sylhet with a pension of 500 only.