

# AHOM LANGUAGE : ITS TYPOLOGY, LANGUAGE CONTACT AND HISTORICAL IMPLICATIONS IN SOUTH-EAST ASIAN LANGUAGES.

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**Introduction :** The Tai, having 197 (one hundred and ninety seven) varieties (Diller 1994 : 8-17) is a major language of South-East Asia. One of the said varieties is the Ahom which was once the **National Language** of *Moung Dun Sun Kham*, nowadays called **Assam**, situated in the North-East of present day India. Assam was ruled over by the Tai Ahoms for six hundred years from 1228 A. D. The Ahoms are politically Indians but socially and culturally, South-East Asians. “.....Assam is much different from India. Geographically its land form and climate are part of Southeast Asia .....A study of Assam requires an understanding of T'ai society and culture. Britain and India have made us believe incorrectly that Assam is India. The fact is that Assam is not India. It may be more correct to study Assam as a part of Southeast Asia. At least Assam is a frontier whereby the culture from Southeast Asia is confronting with the culture of India” (Nartsupa and Wichasin 1994 : 5-21). In view of the above perspectives the Ahom language is here taken up for discussion in its typology, language contact and historical implications as one of the important languages of South-East Asia.

## **Typology :**

(1) **Character** - The Ahom is regarded as a dead language, but it “remains preserved for posterity through

I) Historical works

II) Lexicographical works.” (Weidert 1979 : N.A.)






Moreover the Ahom religious chants available in the *Khiek Lai* (religious texts) contain the Ahom language to survive in tongues although chiefly amongst the Ahom priests, namely, *Mo-sam* (*Mo-hung*, *Mo-plong* and *Sang - bun*) and some of the *Mo-Sai* (the fourth group of Ahom scholars) of the Ahom people. It is therefore that the Ahom language is not dead but is in slumber for the last two hundred years or





so. The Ahom language cannot die because its survival is ascertained by the old manuscripts now available in hundreds if not in thousands.

















After the Ahoms have recently attempted their best to awake the Ahom language from slumber, books and many other writings in Ahom language and Ahom script have been composed and published (Nartsupha and Wichasin 1995 : 3-37).

“At present the Ban Ok Pup Lik Muang Tai Association arranged a large cultural meeting among various Tai groups each year, attended by tens of thousand people. The Association issued a yearly commemorative journal *Souvenir* in 3 languages (Tai, Assamese and English). The Ahom knew their language better. They wrote short stories and issued them in pamphlets, “Kham Seng” (1992) and in book form, “Moang Fi,” (1993) as publications of the Association. These two works used the Ahom language and the Ahom characters. Chow Nagen Hazarika was the editor of Kham Seng and the author of Moang Fi. Moang Fi consisted of 13 Tai songs written in Tai Ahom characters. It can be regarded as the first Ahom literary work of a new era.”

Moreover many writings both prose and poetry including lyrics are being composed in Ahom language and are published in different magazines, such as *Lik Tai Khwam Tai*, 1990, Editor– Chow Nagen Hazarika, *Le-Nge-Ri*–1993, Editor–Chow Bhola Changmai, *Namruk*, 1994, Editor– Chow Nagen Hazarika, *Che-Mo-Ngen*, 1995, Editor–Chow Siddhinath Gogoi, *Che- Hung*, 1996, *Ting-Khang*, 1997, *Ai-Ma-Nang*, 1998 etc. All these writings bear Ahom character, such as, (a) less grammar, more expression, (b) no infiltration (of course except a few) of words from Pali and other languages, thereby keeping the Ahom language in its ancient Tai form. Besides, the following are also some of the characteristics of the Ahom language (c) *bā* ( 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 ) sometimes is pronounced as *wā*, ( 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 ) but invariably when suffixing a word, (d) *jā* ( 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫 ) is sometimes pronounced as *yā* (as in *jāng* pronounced as *yāng* but generally as *jā*), (e) consonant clusters are found in Ahom language, such as *klā* ( 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫𑜁𑜪 ), *kwā* ( 𑜀𑜢𑜤𑜰𑜫𑜁𑜪 ), *kyā* as in

*kyeng* (  ) but for having no sufficient symbol to represent them separately, it sometimes becomes difficult to ascertain as to which should be what. In Ahom language and script there is no *ār* as appearing in English words such as 'Chart', 'Shirt' as found in some other Tai languages. The symbol *rā* (  ) was originally not there in Ahom. It was represented by (  ) such as appearing in (  ) but later on (  ) was adopted, may be in the 18th century.

(2) **Language group** : "The Ahom language of Assam is a branch of the Tai language belonging to the Siamese-Chinese family of the Indo-Chinese forms of speech" (Barua and Phukan 1964 : 201) and is regarded to have fallen under the northern group of Tai languages (Grierson and Barua 1920 : 8). Every Ahom word like that of any other Tai language consists of one syllable. "A word may consist of a vowel alone." (Grierson and Barua 1920 : 9). The language is a tonal one and a word may carry one meaning, such as *āp* (  ) meaning 'to bathe', *āt* (  ) meaning 'to sprain the waist', *im* (  ) meaning 'to eat to one's satisfaction' etc. and to the extent of twenty two meanings, e.g., *khān* (  ) meaning 'to neglect' 'to punish', 'to trade', 'to speak', 'to go quickly', 'to make haste', 'to fall down', 'the crowing of a cock', 'to be lazy', 'pain', 'an axe', 'rust', 'a sickle', 'a fish spear', 'speech', 'two boats lashed together side by side', 'kind of fish called *kātal*', 'thin-legged like that of a crow', 'punishment', 'a shuttle', 'laziness' (Barua and Phukan 1964 : 20) depending upon the tone applied to the word.

(3) **Alphabet** : The Ahom alphabet had originally sixteen vowels and nineteen consonants but during the eighteenth century, five other consonants, namely, *gā* (  ), *ghā* (  ), *dhā* (  ), *bhā* (  ), and *jhā* (  ) were adopted. There is only one word, namely, *dhek* (  ), meaning 'to intimidate with loud, sudden and angry words,' 'to get angry', 'to beat', comprising of letter *dhā* (  ) and no Tai word at all to comprise of *gā*, *ghā* *bhā* and *jhā* letters. *ā* (  ) is a consonant and not a vowel as shown by Dr. G. A. Grierson (Grierson and Barua 1920 : 23). In the Ahom alphabet there is no letter to represent *Hs* or *Sh*. The consonant sign (*sāt*) falls only on letters, namely, *kā* (  ), *ngā*- (  ), *nyā* (  ), *tā* (  ), *nā* (  ), *pā*, (  ) *wā* (  ) and *mā* (  ) when suffixing a word. But while writing words belonging to English, Indo-European and other languages in Ahom script, the consonant sign has to be applied to other

suffixed letters too (e.g., English word ‘are’ has to be written as (𑜋𑜨𑜧) which is against grammatical rules of the Ahom language. It is, therefore, considered that modification of some of the grammatical rules in the use of consonant sign has to be made. But if done so, the original Ahom character shall be lost, and, if not, modernisation to compete with other modern languages shall be hampered. The Ahoms, therefore, are in two horns of dilemma at present.

(4) **Script** : “In Nothern Thailand or Lanna before the 1932 coup d’etat, two kinds of alphabet were in use. The first one develops form R. G. (King Rama Gamhen) and is named as *Fak Kham* (tamarind pod) alphabet (T.P.), because the characters are elongated. The second one is derived from Mon and is called Thai Yuan aplhabet (T.Y.)” (Na Nagara n.d. : 1). Scholars are of the opinion that the Ahom script is the oldest Tai script and was adopted from the old *Mon* script. Prasert Na Nagara (n.d. 4) writes –

“The minority group in any locality usually would use the local alphabet, e.g., *Nan Chao* inscriptions were written in Chinese characters. Thai in Lanna was likely to use Mon alphabet. That in Lopburi should use Khom alphabet. Thai Ahom might use Assamese writing. Being not a ruling class the Thais would not find it necessary to force anybody to write Thai alphabet.....Codes said further that there are many Shan characters similar to Thai Ahom which should represent an older Thai writing. But some epigraphists think that the Thai Ahom was invented very recently.”

The above opinions of Prasert Na Nagara go out of acceptability, because :

(1) At the time of Ahom advent in and possession of the area of *Moung Dun Sun Kham* (now upper Assam proper), the Assamese language was not there. What was there were the non-Assamese tribal dialects of the Morans, the Barahis and the Chutiyas without having any script. The Assamese script, called the *Garhgaya lipi* was adopted by the Ahoms during the reign of Chow Fa Suo-Seng-Fa (1603-1649 A.D.) that too for writing Assamese and not Ahom. This is ascertained from the available numismatic evidence that coins were for the first time struck in Assamese language in 1648 A.D. by that king (Allan 1986).

(2) The first Ahom coin in Ahom script and Ahom language was struck by Chow Lung Suo-Bin-Fa during 1281-1293 A.D. (Wilson 1986)

(3) Most of the Ahom religious texts and chants, except the *Khiek-lai Che-Rai-Doy* were written much before the coming of Chow Lung Suo-Ka-Fa and his companions to *Moung Dun Sun Kham*. This is supposed so because in those texts and chants no mention of any place, person and history of this new land is made or referred to.

The Tai Ahom script is, therefore, not of recent origin. This is the base script from which other Tai scripts have emerged after being modified in the recent past.

**Language contact :** The Ahoms had contacts with Tribal, Indo-Aryan, Arabic, English, Shan and other Tai languages. As a result some Ahom words, person-names, place-names in the North-East India were adopted in Assamese and tribal languages. **Paduli** < *pāt-tu-li* (*pāt-tu* = door, *li* = road, which means, the gate-way on road of the house campus), **Jon** < *den* (moon), **Sotal** (courtyard) < *Sān-tān*, **Bihu** < *boi-hu*, that is, *Poy Song Krān*, **Mosai** (a Bengali word to denote a learned and respected person) < *Mo-sāi*, **Tipai** (Missing word) < *Ti-fai* (fire place), **Lachit** < *Lā-chit* (seventh son), **Tirap** (*Ti-rāp*), **Makum** (*Mā-kum*), **Hamren** (Karbi name – place) < *Hang-ren*, etc., are few instances to cite.

On the other hand no Assamese or Indo-European or tribal word appears to have been taken into Ahom language. But it is doubtful if the names of the signs of the Indian and Western Zodiac were adopted by translating into Ahom directly or those came through the Shan language or so. Thus are *Tu-rung* (Aries), *Tu-Soi* (Taurus), *Tu-pit* (Gemini), *Tu-pak* (Cancer), *Tu-tam* (Leo), *Tu-mon* (Virgo), *Tu-tok* (Libra), *Tu-chiu* (Scorpio), *Tu-frong* (Sagittarius), *Tu-kiu*, (Capricornus), *Tu-bon* (Aquarius), *Tu-mun* (Pisces). (Barua and Phukan 1964 : 46). Again, the day-names, namely, *Ta-nang-nuyn* (Sunday), *Ta-nang-la* (Monday), *Ang-ka* (Tuesday), *Put-thu* (Wednesday), *Kya-sap-te* (Thursday), *Sok-kya* (Friday), *Cha-ni* (Saturday) were perhaps adopted from the Shan language.

After the Shans adopted Buddhism, some Shan Buddhist literature came to Ahom, such as *Lit-Phu-Ra*, *Me-Mi-Mang Phu-Ra*, *Lit-Chu-Ra*, *Kham-Pai-Phu-Ra*, *Suk-Sila Kham-Khyem-Pai* etc. Those are

not Ahom religious texts as claimed by some scholars and Buddhist Tais, but were the contemporary **world Tai literature** that were written in the Shan states and some other Tai countries and the Ahoms simply copied them as pieces of Tai literature only. Hiteswar Barbaui wrote that the main religious texts of the Ahom religion were (1) *Phu-Ra-Lung* (or *Pralung*) (2) *Memimang* (3) *Alika* (4) *Junkham* (5) *Munlung* (6) *Tonejau* (7) *Pang klao* (Barbaui 1981 : 389). It is not known on the basis of what Hiteswar Barbaui wrote so, but the religious texts of the Ahoms actually are (1) the *Peyn Ka-Ka* having eight divisions, namely, *Lit Lai*, *Lai Ku Moun*, *Pun Kwo Moun*, *Doi Lai*, *Lit Leng Don*, *Nang Hun Pha*, *Lai Tu*, *Pun Ngao Kham* (2) the *Khiek Lai* (*Puja Vidhi*), such as, *Lit Khiek Um Pha Nu Ru*, *Che Rai Doi*, *Rik Khwon*, *Lit Khiek Luk Fa*, *Lit Khiek Fie Lum*, *Lit Khiek Fie Fai*, *Khiek Khao Kham*, *Lit Khiek Kun Moun*, *Lit Khiek Fie*, *Lit Khiek Fie La-Ka*, *Chum Fa Rung Seng Moun*, *Lit Khiek Fa*, *Lit Khiek Fie Din*, *Lang Ku Ri*, *Khiek Lai Ing San*, *Me Dam Me Fie*, *Khiek Fu Ra Lung*, *Cho Klong* etc. etc. May be that being an ardent devotee of Hinduism, Hiteswar Barbaui did not try to know anything about the Ahom religion and caused the writing as stated above on the basis of his passion, prejudice, hearsays or unresearched concept-formation. Logically this is a fallacy of the form of *Argumentum ad populum* under *Ignoratio Elenchi* in which we appeal to passion, prejudice, pity and not to reason. The funniest thing is that the so-called religious texts as cited by Barbaui have not yet been discovered except No. 1. and No. 2. in Assam. So this was Barbaui's personal opinion only, and not an empirical concept formation.

Some scholars like to opine that there are some words in Ahom which are of Pali origin and came through Buddhism, and, therefore, they come to the conclusion that the religion of the Ahoms is Buddhism. Let us take some of those words for consideration and analysis—

(a) *Chang-Sa-Ri* (Doctor) – is claimed to have been derived from *Chang Acharya*, the latter word being Pali (or Sanskrit) meaning **Chancellor**. But in Ahom language *chang* (𑜋𑜧𑜨) = expert, *sa* (𑜋𑜧) = good, *ri* (𑜋𑜧𑜨) = make, that is, the expert who makes (an ill person) well (recovered).

(b) *Mo-lung syara* (Honourable priest) – Here *syara* is said to be

a Pali word (or Sanskrit) derived from *Acharya*. But in Ahom, *Sa-ra* and not *syara*, means *sa* (স) = good, *ra* (র) = much, meaning, thereby ‘**the very good priest**,’ and therefore, ‘honourable’.

(c) *Sila* as referred to in Ahom *Si-la-sip-kyu-niu rong-boi-boi* is claimed to have come from Pali *Sila* or the Buddhist five *silas*. But in Ahom language, *si* = break (break the fist), *la* = to be opened, *sip* = ten, *kyu* = pair, make a pair, *niu* (নিউ) = finger, meaning, to say *rong boi* (great regards) by making pairs of the ten fingers (of hand). Similarity in the appearance of a word with another may not refer to their synonymity.

(d) *Phra* – means Buddha as claimed by Buddhist Tais. But if *phra* is a shorter (corrupt) form of *phu-ra*, in Ahom, it means the Master of all (*phu* = husband, master, *Ra* = much, all; meaning thereby ‘god’). The opinions of scholars in this regard are varied. Some would like to refer to the stone pillar discovered in 1886-87 A.D. in Pagan, called Myazedi, by Pali Prof. E. Forchhamer, the State Archaeologist of Burma where two inscriptions in four languages were found. The inscriptions were made in the 12th century during the reign of Burmese king Kyanzitha. The languages used were Burman, Pyu, Pali and Mon. In Burman language the word *Purha* is found and its present day spelling is *bhura* but pronounced as *Phaya*. In Burman language *Phaya* or *Phra* generally implies to Buddha. *Phra* may not be a Burman word but a common word found in almost all the languages of South-East Asia. The people of Thailand, Laos and the Shan States call ‘**Buddha**’ in Pali but *phra* in Tai. Basing on all these suppositions Buddhist Tais and other scholars like to come to the conclusion that *phra* is **Buddha** and **Buddha** is *Phra*.

Logically the arguments as stated above suffer from the **Fallacy of Equivocation** which means a fallacy due to the use of a word capable of two or more meanings. Because –

1) Tai philology gives us the idea that *phra* is a shorter (corrupt) form of *Phu-Ra*, meaning, the ‘**Master of all**’. This is a very easy arithmetic to calculate that before conversion to Buddhism, the Tais all over called god as *Phu-ra* or *Phra* but after the conversion they could not find any god in Buddhism and, therefore, started calling Buddha as the *Phra* or god. (The Ahoms, the Assamese and the people of North-East India keep no difference in pronouncing **F** and **Ph** and therefore, **F** and **Ph** are synonymously used by me here and elsewhere in view of keeping harmony with the Ahom pronunciation).

2) In Egyptian mythology '*Phra*' (*Ra* or *Re*) signifying the 'creator' was the sovereign lord of the sky and along with some other eight gods formed the divine company of Ennead of Heliopolis. (New Larousse Encyclopaedia of Mythology 1968 :2) In Phoenician mythology ".....there existed in Byblos a great god who was assimilated to the Egyptian Sun-god *Ra*. He was distinguished by two epithets which were not used in Egypt : he was called '*Ra*, of Foreign lands' and '*Ra*, who is on Pharaoh's Lake' (New Larousse Encyclopaedia of Mythology 1968 : 74).

In order to avoid the said logical fallacy may we be safe to say that the concept and the word *phra* came from Phoenician land or Egypt through Ceylone and was placed in the Myazedi rock inscription. The Burmans, the Mons and Pyus took that word in their languages and also in Pali. After the Tais got into Buddhism they confused between Tai word *Phu-ra* and the Phoenician word *Phra* and regarded '*Phra*' the Phoenician word adopted in Burman and the said other three languages as a corrupt (shorter) form *Phu-ra*.

(3) Every Tai word including the proper names denotes a thing or connotes an attribute. Therefore, if *phra* is a shorter (corrupt) form a *Phu-ra*, it has got a meaning, namely, god (may be Buddha or else). But if the word '*Fra*' is taken from the Myazedi rock inscription, then it is a bastard word in Tai language.

(4) Burman *Phra* or *Bra* implies a male, the female, being *Phri* or *Bri*. The corrupt form of the two words have become *bura* (old man) and *buri* (old lady) to the Tibeto Burmans, mainly, the **Bot** or the **Bodo**. *Bura-buri* in Assam are worshipped as Lord Shiva and his wife, *Parvati*. In Tai language *Phu-ra* or *phra* implies the masculine gender without having any feminine. Even the feminine gender of *phu-ra* cannot grammatically be *phu-ri* or *phri* in Tai. So, *Phra* cannot be Buddha in the ancient and original Tai language. *Phra* may in general, be *god* only.

e) **Tara** (*Ta-ra*) or *Tra* – means **Buddha's female counterpart** in Mahayana and **Dharma** in Hinayana Buddhism. These two meanings of the same word and in the same religion have been leading the Tai people to a great confusion so far as the etymology of the Tai word is concerned. Etymologically the Tai word *Ta-ra* means '**omni eyed**' or '**seer of much, all**' or '**the all-good**' (*Ta* = eye, good, *ra* = much, many, all). The Ahom concept of *Ta-ra* is '**god is omni-eyed** (seer)'



and ‘**god**’ is **all good**. If *Ta-ra* implies the female counterpart of Buddha or implies the Buddhist religion, then it is not a Tai word.

(f) **Along** (*A-long*) – *A-long* implies **Sangha** to the Buddhist Tais, but the etymological meaning in Tai is – *A* = wide spread, *long* = divine power. In short, in Ahom language *Phu-ra Ta-ra A-long* means **god is the Master of all, omni-eyed, all good having wide spread divine power**.

(g) **Sikiya Rani Pan** – Ahom words *si-ki-a* is said to have come from ‘*Sakya*’ (Sakya Muni or Gautama Buddha). In the same manner **Ni-pan** as found in *Ra-ni Pan* is also said to have been taken from Pali ‘**Nibban**’ or Sanskrit ‘Nirvan.’ But while seeing etymologically we find : *si* = divide, *ki* = to blossom, to develop, *a* = wide-spread, *ra* = much, all, *ni* = to go away, *pan* = divide, meaning thereby that god divides (into genus and species) widespread (longest possible distance) everything both life and lifeless and let evolve and run (and transcended Himself). These Tai terms are of pre-Buddhist Tai religion (now retained in Ahom religion) and the Tais converted to Buddhism continued adopting them and applied to the Buddhist ideas and concepts. “Ahom beliefs are very old and unique. Ahom religion is one of the main original non- Buddhist Tai religions, integrated into Ahom ethno-political system. .... Researchers knowing Assam will acknowledge that Ahom religion is still present because in the country side such simple sepulchres in earth often appear to the eyes of the travellers. The traditional Ahom belief system took place without the supervision of Buddhism or Hinduism (Nartsupha 1998 : 36)” (Berlie 2000 : 214-24). As per Ahom philosophy there is no **soul** to get emancipated (to get *nirvana*). What is there is *Dam*, *Phi*, *Khon*, *khom-mu-tu* (to get plunged into), *Kung-ing-ka-phu-ra* and *Phu-ra-lung*, that is, on death one becomes a *dam*, after years it transforms into a *phi*, then it gets *Khom-mu-tu* in *kung-ing-ka phu-ra*, the creator god who was created by *Pha tu ching phrong hum (phu ra lung)* for causing Creation.

**Historical implications :** (1) There are certain words, terms and sentences which indicate the history and antiquity of the Tai people. ‘*Ai Kwo Fa Sang Din Khun (Phu) Nyeu*,’ ‘*Luk Man Fa Si Ip Sang Din*,’ ‘*Fu Leng Chu Tang Fa Sang Plow*,’ ‘*Ngi Ring Kham Kwo Leng Don Sai Re Fa Sang Dam*,’ ‘*Su Man Kon Jang Fa Kwo Heu Fa Sang Plow*’ etc. as found in **Ahom Branji** (Barua 1985 : 2-3) and ‘*Heu Khot Jak Chi Khring Te De Fie Aye Sang Aye*’ as found in a

religious chant are such where the word 'sang' is to be noted. Here *Sang* implies that the Tais are descendants of the **Hsangs** who ruled over pre-China **Chung-kuo** during 1500-1122 B. C. Of course this needs much more research.

(2) Words such as *yang* (yes, positive) and *jin* or *yin* (cold) as found in the **Ahom Lexicons** implies Taoist influence on the ancient Tai religion (Ahom religion called *Fu-Ra-Lung*), because *Yang - Yin* are the main principle of Taoism.

(3) The word *Nām Ning* or *Nām Deng* (Tea) as found in *Lit Khiek Lai Lang-Ku-Ri* speaks of the Tai antiquity of drinking tea.

(4) Some Tai name-places in North-East India also tell us of the history of the settlement of Tai people in the area much before the advent of the Ahoms. **Bulloto Bazar** near Guwahati reminds us of *Bu-Lu-To*, the original king of the **Chu-ang** (Zhuang)s, **Bongaigaon** < *Bong* or *Wang Ngai Lao*, **Ribhoi** < *Ri* (to make) + *Buyoi*, **Tripura** < *Ti-Fra* (or *Fu-ra*), Manipur < *Moung Pong*, Kamata < *Kam Tai* (people), Kamrup < *Kam-ruk* or *Kham - ru*, **Saikhowa** < *Sai-Kuo*, **Betna** < *Bet - na*), **Dongdongia** < *Tai Dong* or *Kam Tai*, **Namgaon** < village of water, Brahmaputra > *Nam Ti-Lao*, etc. Hiuen Tsiang's comments made in the first half of the seventh century about the people of ancient Kamrup is worth noting. He said "The men are of small stature and their complexion a dark yellow.....Their nature is very impetuous and wild : their memories are retentive and they are earnest in study..... The (east) frontiers are contiguous to the barbarians of the South-west China." (Gait 1905 : 24) This definitely speaks of the Tai people. About Kamatapur (as mentioned above), Gait (1905 : 44) writes- "The palace, as in the case of Burmese and Chinese towns, stood in the centre."

(5) Some community-names such as **Jitari dynasty** (*Jit-Tai*, *Jit* = sixth child) said to have ruled over the western Kamrup from 1100 A.D. to 1478 A. D., *Bar Bhuyan* (*Bai-Buyoi*) the pretty chieftains of middle Assam (are they the *Tai Klongs* whom Chow Lung Suo-ka-fa met on his way to *Moung Dun Sun Kham*?), **Khen** (*Khien*) dynasty ruling over a portion of Kamup from 1201 to 1498 A.D., **Matak** (*Phu kao khau*) etc. give us indications of their being of Tai origin.

(6) The names of some of the kings said to have ruled over Kamrupa, such as **Bhaluk** (*Fa-luk*), **Bhagadutta** (*Fa-Kot-Tao*), **Arimatta** (*Ai-Mao-Tai*) appear to be of Tai origin.

(7) Even the ancient name of Thailand, namely, **Sukhodoi** appears to have come from Tai words – *Su-Khru-Dai*, *Su* = arrival, *Khru* = great, *Dai* = Tai or *Doi* = ‘in a company’, meaning thereby, the great arrival of the Dai (Tai) or ‘the great arrival together.’ ‘Thai’ in Ahom means ‘to pull out by force’ and ‘su-khru-thai’ may mean ‘the great arrival and pulling out by force’ (the Mons).

The Ahom language therefore is now the living museum of the Tai language in general because there was no scope for import of foreign words and characters due to its slumber for long 200 years. Moreover the Ahoms are the antiquity-laboratory for all Tai Studies.

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