



example is followed by many of the Rajbongsis. But many rich Muhammedam farmers abstain from this practice, and it would not appear to have been an original custom of Kamrup. All the women would use it to anoint and smooth their hair; but many cannot afford to pay such attention to finery, and their hair is generally in the mop fashion.

An estimate has been given in the Appendix, of the various manners in which the people are clothed by day and by night.—The diet is nearly the same as in Dinajpoor, only the coarser kinds of grain, millet (China Kangni) and summer rice, being cheaper here, are used by the poor in greater abundance, and all classes procure more animal food; but the supply of milk, oil, sugar, vegetables, pulse, salt, and other seasoning, is more scanty.

The common fare of many poor labourers consists of boiled rice, or other grain, which is seasoned with a few wild herbs, boiled with pot-ashes and capsicum; and it is only occasionally, that such persons can procure oil or fish. This poor seasoning is rendered often more savoury by the addition of onions and garlic, which many of the Rajbongsis as well as Moslems have sense to use; many however, by the example of the Bengalese, have been induced to reject onions and garlic; and when scruples prevent a Hindu from using these roots, he usually adds to his curry some acid fruit, such as Boyer Jolpayi, Thaikor and Kamrangga, all of which may be said to grow spontaneously. This kind of seasoning, which resembles the Moretum of the Roman peasants, is sometimes boiled to dryness, and sometimes is allowed to retain some juice, and serves to remove the insipidity of the rice, with which it is eaten. In most parts the usual breakfast of the labourer is called Pandabhat. It consists of rice boiled over night, and allowed to remain in the water until morning, the water is then poured off, and preserved for drinking, while the cold rice is seasoned with a little salt, and raw onions. In some parts however, the common breakfast is a Bhuja or parched rice, without any addition; but this is not near so common as in Dinajpoor.

Although much less merit is attached in Kamrup to a life of mortification, than in other parts of India, yet no one indulges in the daily use of meat or poultry; but probably owing to this indulgence, the Moslems on solemn occasions



are frequently permitted to gratify their appetite for beef, and many Hindus are not restrained from selling their cattle to the monsters, who, they perfectly know, intend to devour them. This indeed they earnestly deny; but the practice is very common in the eastern parts, where the Garos are a numerous class, that do not abhor this kind of feeding. To its poorer votaries the Muhammedan religion is more favourable, than that of the Brahmans, enabling them to procure a little animal food. A Moslem family is seldom so poor, but that on its solemn occasion it can afford to offer a fowl. But a Hindu, unless of the very dregs of impurity, can offer no animal of less value than a kid, and many families can never afford so expensive a sacrifice.

Except in the Eastern wilds game is scarce, so that the farmers of this district in general procure less venison and wild hog and buffalo than in Dinajpore; but in the two eastern divisions every person has a frequent opportunity of procuring these luxuries, and most of the inhabitants have sense enough to enjoy them. Even in the parts of the district where there are vast herds of cattle, and little cultivation, milk during a great part of the year, is little used by the mass of the people; and in the other parts of the district its daily use is confined to a few.

The luxury of a daily use of Ghi or butter falls only to the lot of the very highest classes; and with the poor oil is a very scarce article, although it is one of the chief productions of the district.

In a poor family the monthly allowance of oil may be about 3 Chhotaks (60 s. w. the ser  $4\frac{2}{100}$  ounces), for each person young and old; the whole is consumed in cookery. In a labouring family living at ease, and having as much oil as the people choose, each person may be allowed one ser and a half ( $2\frac{1}{100}$  lb.) a month, of which one half may be used in cookery, one quarter for anointing the body, and one quarter for the lamp. In rich families the proportion is much greater, especially among the Muhammedans, who burn a great quantity.

Black pepper and spices are very little used. In many parts the poor cannot afford turmeric; nor in all can onions and garlic be procured by all who choose to eat them. Salt also is scarce, and a large proportion can only use ashes.





For the poor these have a double advantage, as they supply the place of both salt and turmeric; for this last is never employed, where ashes are the seasoning. The rich frequently use ashes in their dishes as a medicine.

For a family in easy circumstances, which is under no restraint, in the use of seasoning, three quarters ser of 80 s. w. ( $1\frac{5}{16}$  lb.) of salt, one-tenth of that weight of turmeric, and one-tenth of a ser ( $\frac{2}{15}$  lb.) of capsicum, may be considered as an average allowance for each person young and old.

It is only during the dry season, that fish are plenty in the markets, and those in easy circumstances then procure abundance; but during the floods the middling ranks are badly supplied, and use pulse as a substitute. The lower classes are not able to purchase at any season; but it is during the floods, that they obtain their principal supply. Every rice field then swarms with small miserable fish, which are caught in baskets, and what is not immediately used, is preserved by the following process. The people remove the head, fins, entrails, and back-bone, dry the fish by exposing them on mats to the sun, and then beat them in a mortar with the roots of the Ol (*Tacca Rumphii*), the stems, (*petioli*) of the Man Kochu (*arum mucronatum* E. M.) a little turmeric, and potash. The mass is formed into balls called Sidol, which are dried in the sun, and will keep until next season. In the eastern parts much fish is dried in the sun without salt, and much is used in that vicinity, and a little is sent to the western parts of the district.

The green vegetables used in the diet of the natives consist more of the kinds called Sak, that is of leaves and tender stems, than of the kind called Torkari, which includes fruits and roots; and the poor often sell the vegetables which they rear, and content themselves with such as grow wild, or with the leaves of crops, that are commonly cultivated for other purposes (*Mustard*, *corchorus*), which cost them nothing. If the quality of the food of the natives is here inferior to that in Dinajpoor, they enjoy some luxuries in greater abundance, of which an estimate is given in the Appendix.

Tobacco is more plentiful, than in Dinajpoor, and its smoke is devoured by the men in most amazing quantities. Many however in the south east, where little is raised, do not procure it in an abundance equal to their inordinate desires;



and a large proportion cannot afford to have it prepared with treacle, 1 ser 60 s. w. ( $1 \frac{64}{100}$  lb.) of tobacco leaves unprepared is reckoned a reasonable allowance for a man to smoke in a month. He will require double the quantity of prepared tobacco, because one half of the mass consists of treacle. In some parts however, where large quantities are grown, and every farmer has it in his field, a man consumes two sers a month. On the whole however 12 sers a year for each man may be allowed for the consumption of the country. Except open and abandoned prostitutes all women abstain from this vile practice, and no great number defile themselves by chewing tobacco.

The use of betle is also carried to an excessive degree, and many have their mouths constantly crammed with it. The practice seems to gather strength as one advances towards the east, until at Ava it is considered as unbecoming a person of fashion to be able to articulate his speech. The same probably was once the fashion in Kamrup, and has produced the peculiarities in the pronunciation of the people, that will be hereafter mentioned. It will be seen, that one of the most common professions in the district is the preparation of lime from shells, and, although a great deal is used for the manufacture of indigo, yet by far the largest quantity is consumed in chewing betle. Many however cannot procure this savoury morsel in an abundance equal to their desires, and in many parts of the district very few can afford to heighten its relish by the addition of Catechu (Khoyer). I have heard it estimated, that on an average not less than 1 r. a year can be allowed for the consumption of betle-nut in each house. The leaf may cost two thirds as much, although in this there is great variation.

Intoxication is much more prevalent here than in Dinaj-poor. The natives of Ronggopoor are equally ignorant of the use of palm wine, but they distil a considerable quantity of grain, and many jolly fellows can afford to indulge themselves at a very moderate rate; by means of the vast extent of frontier with Gorkha, Bhotan, Vihar, and Asam, in all of which the distillery is free, and at numerous places on the frontier liquor is sold at  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the price, which it costs in the Company's territory. I have before noticed, that this species of intoxication is considered by the natives as adding to the





health and strength of those who are addicted to it, an opinion which must be received with caution, as the liquor is in general taken to great excess. The practice is not held in the same disgrace by the Hindus of Kamrup as by those of other places, so that a great many of them are not ashamed to drink in public. In Bottrishazari indeed I was told, that 15 persons out of 16, both men and women, used spirituous liquor; but in general moderately, so that persons, who were beastly dram-drinkers were rarer in that part than usual. In Dinajpoor, with a larger population, I found only 15 stills, while here I heard of 27, and the quantity procured at the frontier is very considerable. Drunkenness however is but a small part of the intoxication carried on in this district. A vast many use the poppy, and a few the hemp.

A great many use opium, partly swallowing it, and partly smoking it in the form called Mudut. This is made first by boiling some 200 betle leaves, and then parching them, to these are added from 3 to 4½ drams (Apothecaries weight) of opium, and they are mixed in the hot vessel, and formed into small balls, which are smoked like tobacco. More people, especially the poor, intoxicate themselves with the ripe capsules of the Posto or Poppy. These are prepared in two ways; five dry capsules, the seed having been taken out, are sometimes put into a little cold water for about 20 minutes. They are then squeezed with the hand, and the water, having been strained through a cloth, is drunk at once. In the other manner the dry capsules are parched, and then reduced to powder, which is kept, and a little is taken in cold water, when wanted. The people who use the poppy in any of these ways, usually take every day two or three doses, and although constantly intoxicated, are not disabled from transacting business; nay they are said even to be able to work the better; but, if they omit a single dose, they are quite feeble and stupid; and their constitutions are soon exhausted unless they, at the same time, can afford a nourishing diet, in which case the practice is said to do no harm. The usual dose of Opium is  $\frac{1}{16}$  s. w. (11 or 12 grains) twice a day.

In my account of Dinajpoor, I have already described the two manners of using the hemp for intoxication, Gangja and Siddhi. Although the plant is a common and offensive weed, the Siddhi is little used in this district, and is chiefly confined



to the Vaishnav and pure casts of Bahirbondo; but much Gangja is taken, and is all imported. In habituating themselves to its use some people are killed; but after they are seasoned, it produces nearly the same effects as opium. The use of both plants is considered as much more reputable than that of the juice of the grape, and in this district never leads to any of those violent excesses of ungovernable rage, which it is imagined to produce among the Malays.

Bamboo is the most common fuel, and cow dung is very little used. Near the woods of the east, and near some of the large rivers that contain floating timber, such as the Brohmoputro Tista and Mahanonda, wood is much employed; and in the level parts of the eastern wastes, reeds are the most usual fuel. In the cold season almost every one can make a fire, morning and evening, to warm themselves. The poor then procure stubble, cow dung, and sticks, that they gather about the villages. Oil for the lamp cannot be procured by the poor; even while they eat their supper, which is done by the light of a little straw or reeds.

Among the domestics, both male and female, there are many slaves, especially towards Asam, and every where along the northern frontier. The Asamese sell a good many slaves, as will be mentioned in the account of the commerce, and the people of Vihar are willing to carry on the same trade. The turbulent chiefs of the east are desirous of keeping slaves, as more ready than free men to perform acts of violence. Such slaves are well treated, and promoted to offices of considerable trust in the management of their master's affairs. They in general receive a good farm, upon which their families reside, and one man out of each attends his master, and a girl or old woman is occasionally required to wait on her lady. In the civilized parts many are induced to keep slaves from the difficulty of procuring servants, especially of the female sex. The slaves there however, do not seem to be on the increase, and the importation seems to do no more than keep up the number, although the master always procures a wife for his slave. Free parents do not give their daughters in marriage to slaves; and, if very poor, prefer selling their daughters to a prostitute. Poor parents, who are under the necessity of parting with even their male children, which they sell with more reluctance than females,





as being a greater resource for support in old age, give them for a few rupees to any decent person, that will undertake to rear them. These are in general considered as a kind of adopted children, and are called Palok-beta or sons by nourishment. Wealthy people seldom take such children, because, if active and industrious, they usually leave their nourishers, when they grow up, and in fact are not slaves, although while they remain with their master, they receive no wages. The domestic slaves of the rich are usually accused of being very full of tricks, and are almost entirely of castes, that the masters consider pure. A rich Hindu would not accept of a Moslem slave, and still less of one of impure birth. It is among the Muhammedans, that the custom of nourishing poor children is chiefly practised.

The number of domestics here seems to exceed the proportion in Dinajpoor, especially in females, and has induced more indulgence towards those who are free, as people are willing to engage young married women, and to submit to the inconvenience of interruptions from their breeding, rather than be altogether deprived of an assistance so necessary to female delicacy. Still, however, the greater part of the free women servants (Dasis) are old widows, and receive only clothes and food. It is indeed alleged, that a good many young women are kept in the houses of rich men of high castes, and under the modest name of servant maids, are in reality concubines. This will perhaps in some measure account for a difference that is stated between this district and Dinajpoor. There most of the women servants were stated to be old, and employed in the families of Moslems. Here most are stated to be in Hindu families, and many of them to be young. It must be observed, that a pure Hindu of Bengal is on no account permitted to keep a concubine. It is chiefly in the northern parts that the Hindu families keep many female domestics. In the south, where the manners of Bengal are more strictly observed, most of the women servants are old, and are chiefly employed in Muhammedan families. The free men servants (Bhandaries), usually receive one rupee to 12 anas a month, and their food and raiment, worth as much more. They are mostly married. Bhandari properly signifies a store-keeper; but the servants are employed in the same manner here as in Dinajpoor.



The equipage of the natives here is much the same as in Dinajpoor. One Zemindar has procured a four-wheeled carriage, and two have bought buggies, and it is to be wished, that some encouragement was given to this spirit of laying out their money on what might encourage industry, in place of squandering it in merely filling the bellies of idle vagrants, or of hungry retainers. There are several tame elephants kept by natives, and a good many ponies; but I heard of only one horse; and the natives, if possible, are still less disposed than those of Dinajpoor to exercise on horseback, or to the sports of the field. There are a great many palanquins; but few keep regular sets of bearers, and in some parts men of that kind cannot be procured to hire. The Zemindars and their chief agents generally give lands at a low rent to a sufficient number of persons of this kind, and call on them when there is occasion; and it is only on the days, which they actually work, that they are allowed pay. The bearers like this manner of living much better than being on constant wages and attendance. The Appendix gives a view of the attendants and conveyances used by the natives of this district.

The number of common beggars, according to the best accounts which I could collect, is about 5500. By far the greater part are real objects of charity, being lame, blind, and infirm persons, who have no relations able to support them; but in several parts, especially towards the north and west in the more newly subdued country, I heard complaints of indolence being a principal cause of their distress. Everywhere, except in Serkar Ghoraghat, the men throw as much of the labour upon the women as possible; but in Patgang, the smallest division in the district, it was said, that not less than 300 fellows would not work more than three hours in the day, and then went out to beg, allowing their wives to toil the remainder of the day. These creatures I have not included in the list, as they are fitter objects for the whip than for charity. The people of no other division, however, are so bad. The natives are in general abundantly charitable. Many of the poor distressed creatures find well-disposed persons, who give them constant shelter in their outhouses, and who take care of them when unable to go out to beg; and by far the greater part are allowed to remain in this manner in the different farm houses in the vicinity, taking them by





turns of eight or ten days at a time. A few are reduced to sleep in the sheds of market places, or even under trees. This seems to be chiefly confined to the south end of the district, where it would seem, that the people are less charitable; and in some divisions there it was stated, that the beggars were usually totally neglected, when unable to go about, and of course perished from entire want of care. I have, however, little confidence in what was stated by some of the persons who gave me this information; as I know that they wished to make everything appear as bad as possible, and had no truth in them. Charity, indeed, is one of the principal virtues among the natives, and the beggars seem to suffer most from want of clothing, as is indeed the case with the labouring poor.

The people of this district have nearly the same dispositions as those of Dinajpoor; but they indulge more in the sensual appetites, and are somewhat less industrious, I heard many fewer complaints of theft, robbery, and murder than in Dinajpoor. This, I am however told, is only an apparent tranquillity, and is owing to the late changes of the magistrates; as after a new magistrate arrives, the thieves always wait, until they see what alterations have been made in the sources for detection; and do not recommence until they have adopted measures by which they imagine that these may be frustrated. The corruption of manners, contrary to what one would expect, is by far the greatest in the more remote and less cultivated parts of the district.

*Education.*—The education of youth in human knowledge is still more neglected than in Dinajpoor, and there is no such thing as a public school of any kind. In place of having Pathsals, where a master (Guru) is employed to instruct any children that may apply, in reading and writing the vulgar language, and in keeping accounts, parents either instruct their own children, or hire a teacher (Guru), who, in addition to the miserable pittance and food that he receives from his master, is allowed to teach four or five children of the neighbourhood, by which his situation is rendered somewhat more tolerable. In a few places four or five families unite, and hire a Guru in common, who eats by turns in the different houses of his employers, and receives from 2 to 4 anas a month from each child. The total number of teachers





(Gurus), according to what I heard, is about 540, and each usually teaches from five to seven children. The education thus bestowed, in a large proportion, goes no farther than to enable the scholar to sign his name, and its usual highest extent is to enable a man to guess at the meaning of a letter, to give receipts, and to keep the simple accounts, that are used by the persons employed in villages for collecting the rents. Even this is too much to be expected from a native of some portions of the district, where the village collectors (Patgiri) are under the necessity of assisting their calculations by means of lines drawn on the sand, and of keeping their records by means of notched sticks or knotted strings. Almost every person, therefore, employed in any higher department is a foreigner; nor, except in a very few cases, is there to be found any person born in the district, who is qualified to be a common clerk (Mohurrer). Some of these strangers have now indeed brought their families to reside, and have in some measure been naturalized; but by far the greater part leave their families in their native provinces, and consider themselves here as in a kind of banishment.

Here as in Dinajpore it is considered highly improper to bestow any literary education on women, and no man would marry a girl who was known to be capable of reading; but as girls of rank are usually married at about eight years of age, and continue to live with their parents for four or five years afterwards, the husbands are sometimes deceived, and on receiving their wives find, that after marriage they have learned the dreadful science, which is supposed will prove soon fatal to their unfortunate spouses; for it is believed that no man lives long who has a wife that knows too much. Although this science has in no instance, I believe, proceeded farther than the being able to indite a letter, and to examine the accounts of their servants; yet it has proved highly beneficial to many families, which have been rescued from impending destruction, by the management of their affairs having come into the hands of such ladies. Women of rank in this country, being much less dissipated than the men, retain their faculties more entire, and are in general vastly more fit for the management of their estates; and several now in this district are considered as intolerable nuisances by the sharks, who preyed on their husbands, and





who do not fail to be joined by the whole corps in raising a cry against such illegitimate knowledge.

Although Kamrup is considered by the natives as very distinct from Bengal; and although all its original tribes have features, which, in my opinion, clearly indicate their having a common origin with the Chinese and other nations that compose the great race of the eastern parts of the ancient continent; yet the language of Bengal, in various degrees of impurity, prevails pretty universally. The dialects differ very considerably at short distances, and it was stated, that in this district there were the following divisions, each of which differed in their accent, and in the pronunciation of certain words, and even occasionally used words in different meanings.

The first division comprehends Patilado, Bahirbondo, Bhitorbondo, Goyvari, Ghurla, Tariya and Jamira of this district, and Jafershahi with the other parts of Nator that are east from the Korotoya. 2. Comprehends the division of Govindogunj with the adjacent territory of Islamabad; but the language there differs very little from that which is spoken in the remainder of Serkar Ghoraghat on both sides of the Korotoya, and includes also the small district of Serkar Bazuba. The third dialect prevails over, the greater part of Serkar Koch Vihar; but does not extend to Boda, and differs a good deal from that of Vihar proper, or what remains subject to the Raja. The fourth dialect is spoken in the district of Boda. The fifth dialect is used in Bottrishazari. The sixth dialect is spoken in the eastern extremity of this district, and includes the western extremity of Asam.

The Bengalese language prevails also over a great part of Eastern Asam, and of late has even become that of the court. There is however great reason to think, that it is not the original language of Kamrup, and that it did not make great progress until of late. The Koch compose by far the greater part of the original inhabitants, and one portion of that tribe, the Panikoch, which still retains the primitive manners, retains also a language, that is totally and radically different from the Bengalese. Similar changes have taken place with respect to some of the other tribes of Kamrup, and their conversion to the Hindu law, or even their having adopted the manner of cultivating with the plough, has been



accompanied by a change in their language. The Rabhas form a very numerous tribe, part of which retain their original language and manner of cultivation by the hoe, and part have adopted the language and plough of the Bengalese; yet both still preserve the name and the impure manners of their tribe. The Mech are also a numerous tribe, part of which retain their own customs and language, and part without changing their name have adopted those of Bengal; while it is said, that another tribe called Kuri, who are pretty numerous near the Brohmoputro, are of the same origin with the Mech; but, being ashamed of their impure extraction, have totally changed their name; just as the poorer class of Koch are affronted at being called by any other appellation but that of Rajbongsi, although in Nepal, Asam and every other part, where their chiefs have no influence, the two terms are considered as synonymous. Even the people governing Asam, since their conversion to the Hindu tenets in the reign of Godadhor Singho, have entirely adopted the language of Bengal, and the inscriptions on the coin of all the successors of that prince are in that dialect and character, while the original language, which was prevalent when the Mogul army of Aurungzebe invaded the country, is now confined to the chronicles of the reigning family, and to the mysterious ceremonies with which the tutelary deity of the prince is still worshipped.

In the comparative vocabulary of dialects, which I compiled, may be found specimens of all the original languages spoken in Kamrup, that I could procure, together with the dialects of the Bengalese commonly used at Ronggopoor and at Jorhat, the present capital of Asam; and in order explain their meaning I added the Sangskrita and to Prakrito of Bengal, as spoken by the Pandits of this country. The choice of words in most of the languages was directed by the vocabularies published at Calcutta, although I did not receive these in time for procuring some of the dialects complete. The work was conducted by the Pandit of the survey, who, I am afraid, has expressed the barbarous words without much exactitude; patience in such investigations being a virtue not very common in the sacred order; but in some cases he was assisted by a relation of the Vihar Raja, who has obtained a great reputation for his learning.





In this district the Prakrito of Bengal has made very little progress, and even many of the women of the Pandits do not understand it.

The books in this language, which are most usually read in this district, are:—1. The Ramayon of Kirtivas, a legend concerning Ram.—2. The Ramayon of Odbhutacharyo, another of the same, by a different author.—3. The Kovi-kongkon, a hymn in praise of Parboti the wife of Sib, which is usually sung by the people called Monggolchondi.—4. The Bishohori, a hymn in praise of the goddess of serpents, extracted and translated from the Podmopuran of Vyas. I have already given some account of its contents.—5. The Chaitonyo choritamrito, a legend concerning the chief teachers among the Goswamis of Bengal.—6. The Mohabharot of Kasidas, a poem concerning the wars of Yudhishtir and Duryodhon.—7. The Jaimini Bharot, a poem on the same subject, by a different author.

The pronunciation even of the Prakrito differs very much from that of Calcutta. The people of Kamrup in particular, like those of Ava, have a strong aversion to the sound R, which is never pronounced at the beginning of a word. In the eastern parts of the district also, and in Asam the letter, which in Calcutta is pronounced S, is there pronounced H; thus Asam is universally pronounced Aham. B. or V. at the end of a word is commonly changed into O, as Deo for Dev. The Muhammedans in general have adopted the vulgar language of Bengal, and many of them do not understand a word of the Moorish dialect. On the whole, however, the Muhammedans seem rather better educated than in Dinajpoor, and seem to be more fitted for the business of the courts than the Hindus, whose views are more directed to the management of the landed estates, which indeed in the present state of affairs is more profitable.

A learned Muhammedan, Saadutullah, who is a person of some fortune, resides in this district, and instructs from five to seven pupils in Arabic and Persian literature. His pupils are expected to have made some progress, before they are received, and such as are Muhammedans are boarded at his expense. He instructs also Hindus, without any fee; but their customs do not permit them to live in his house. His only reward is reputation; and, when his pupils obtain any



office, it is expected, that they should make him presents under the name of Rateh. His pupils study the Allami Zulikha and Bahardanesh, and the works of Molla Hafez.

Another person belonging to the district had a similar stock of learning, and taught on the same plan, which too nearly resembles that of the Pandits to be of much use, and he is now infirm, and has become unable to teach. Very few indeed understand Arabic, or are men of any kind of learning; but one Zemindar employs a Moulvi to instruct his children in the Arabic language, and three officers of the court are said to be well informed men. These however are not natives of the district.

The number of Akhuns or Muhammedan teachers so far as I could learn is about 180. Of these a few understand some Persian, which is considered as the polite language, that every gentleman, Hindu or Moslem should understand. These teachers instruct the young Zemindars, and wealthy Muhammedans, so far as to be able to read a letter on business or to understand the common forms of law proceedings. In the whole district, foreigners included, there may be 1000 persons who have acquired these accomplishments. Teachers of this kind who can instruct youth in the Persian language, when employed by a person of rank, receive from 5 to 12 rs. a month, and are allowed to teach one or two children besides those of the employer. Each of these gives him for one-half to 2 rs. a month. Poorer persons give lower wages; but the master is allowed to instruct a greater number of strange children, so that on the whole his allowances are nearly the same, and amount to from 7 to 14 rs. a month according to the number of books, which it is supposed that he is able to explain. Children begin to learn Persian at from five to seven years of age, and usually employ 10 years in its study.

By far the greater part of the Akhuns, however, understand neither Persian nor Arabic, and their employment is to teach the Moslems to read the koran. The explanation is far above their level, and there is much room to suspect, that among the Kazis even there are some who read without understanding. A great many persons are able to pronounce the words when they see them written, and this is considered as very meritorious in the sight of God. Many of the Mollas, however, have not penetrated so far into the depths of learn-





ing, and content themselves with having committed certain portions to memory.

The higher schools of the Hindus (Chauvaris) are exactly on the same footing as in Dinajpoor. The number of academicians (Odhyapoks) is 34, and there is less science than in that country. The teachers confine themselves almost entirely to grammar, and a little smattering of law; and only three men, Gaurinath Torkovagis, Norendro Torkobhushon, and Kalisongkor Torkalongkar, instruct any persons in the Hindu philosophy.

The science of explaining the Beds is entirely confined to one person, a native of Varanosi (Benares), who is Pandit to the court, and is not at all taught. One Brahman and some Daivoks have acquired sufficient skill in astronomy to be able to construct an almanac, and instruct some pupils; and five or six Pandits instruct youth in the science called Agom or Magic, a study which is said at one time to have flourished in Kamrup.

The Pandits or learned Brahmans, in general, understand more or less of the Sangskrita language and literature (Vyakoron), with a little tincture of law (Smriti), and as much Jyotish (astrology) as enables them to note and calculate nativities, or to explain the fates from the lines on the hand. The Pandits who are skilled in Grammar, Law and Philosophy are most respected; but unless they are uncommonly learned, or have joined to these sciences the skill of calculating nativities, or chiromancy, or are believed to have acquired power by the science of Agom, their profit is very inconsiderable. A person, who is not remarkably celebrated for his profundity in these latter arts, can earn from 10 to 15 rs. a month; but on all public occasions must give way to the Pandit who knows no other science than grammar. The knowledge however of  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the Pandits, I am told, extends no farther than to be able to read the portions of the sacred writings used at ceremonies, and to know the proper manner in which these should be performed (Dosokormo). These do not understand what they read.

Jyotish, the science comprehending not only Astronomy, but also Astrology, Chiromancy and other such follies, is professed not only by the Brahmans but by the Daivoks, who are more numerous in this district than in Dinajpoor,



and five of them are said to have also acquired such a knowledge of Astronomy as to be able to construct an almanac, while perhaps 15 or 20 may be able to calculate nativities. These instruct their own families, and are consulted by all classes. But the generality are totally ignorant of any kind of science, and to these the lower classes are almost entirely left, while the higher in general receive the decrees of fate from the Brahmans. Chiromancy (Samudrik) is considered as a higher science than the calculation of nativities, and seems to be left entirely to the practise of the sacred order; but another high part of the Jyotish philosophy, by which the intentions of people are discovered (Prosno), has been invaded by a Daivok of Bahirbondo.

The Muhammedans having no wise men of their own, occasionally consult those of the Hindus; but by both parties this is justly considered as improper. The era followed in this district, as well as in Dinajpoor, on all solemn occasions among the Hindus, is that of Sokadityo, or Sok, of which the first year corresponds with part of our years 77 and 78. This is evidently the same era with what in the south of India is considered as that of Salivahon; but the people here differ very much from those of the south concerning the great persons of those remote times. According to Komo-lakanto, the most learned Brahman of this district, the era of Salivahon is called Sumbut, and commences 134 years before that of Sak, so that it is evidently the same with what in the south is called the era of Vikrom, who according to the tradition there governed 144 years, and was destroyed by Salivahon; but here, on the contrary, it is alleged, that the era of Salivahon or Sumbut continued 134 years, and was then supplanted by that named after a prince called Sokadityo who was killed by Vikrom.

Several clepsydras are kept in the district, the natives having no better method of ascertaining time. In the one at the Company's factory the cup has been adapted to divide the day and night into 24 equal parts, after the European manner. At Olipoor, where every thing about the office for collecting the landlords rent is on the grandest scale, that the country has seen, I found the Astronomer (Daivok) who regulated the time, had still a good deal to learn in his science. He was aware, that the hours of the day should





be of different lengths from those of the night, at different seasons of the year; but he had no contrivance for marking the difference. He had only one cup, which of course would sink at equal times throughout the year, and he corrected himself twice a-day, so often as he would get an observation of sunrise and sunset, in which he did not descend to vain distinctions of a few minutes. He knew, however, the number of his cups, which at different seasons should be allowed for each of the eight watches of the day and of the night, so that in marking the watches he was not very erroneous; but he had no means of dividing each watch into  $7\frac{1}{2}$  Dandas, as he ought. These however are trifles, that do not in the least affect the philosophy of his temper. His establishment was ample, as he had three assistants, who, whatever may have been their education, had all the advantage of having been born astronomers.

Agom or magic at one time flourished in Kamrup, and one of its sects, which will be hereafter mentioned, seem to have taken its rise in this country; but at present the Brahmans of Kamrup are not considered as very remarkable for the depth of their knowledge, especially in the Virbhav, which was that in which formerly they most peculiarly excelled. Still however there are some pretenders to reputation, and I heard of two men, who could not be intoxicated by any substance. I did not see them, as they were somewhat vain of their uncommon endowments; but my people informed me, that one of them, in their presence, took at one draught a bottle of brandy, in which a handful of Dhutura seed (*Datura Metel*) had been mixed; and it produced no sensible effect. The other was evidently disordered by a smaller dose; but was far from having lost his senses. These persons were supposed to have obtained their extraordinary powers chiefly through the favour of the Nayika, who are the female angels or messengers of the Saktis or female deities. They were believed to pass most of their time in prayer, were extremely venerated, and all persons were eager to solicit their assistance, either to remove misfortunes, or to procure an increase of prosperity; but the men were too modest to trouble their patrons, except on extraordinary occasions. One of them had lived much with Ramkrishno the last Raja of Nator, and had been a principal means of inducing that person to



despise the groveling affairs of his vast estate, and to dedicate almost his whole time to religion. The other, previous to the time when my people met him, had been a year with the Raja of Vihar, and was loud in the praises of the religious disposition which that chief has manifested, and of the extraordinary powers with which he has been rewarded by the gods, as I have already mentioned.

Although magic is not very flourishing in the hands of the sacred order of Kamrup, it has a numerous class of practitioners among the plebeians both Hindus and Muhammedans, who by means of certain incantations pretend to cure diseases and the bites of serpents, and to cast out devils. These incantations, are powerful forms commanding the disorder in the name of certain deities to quit the afflicted person, and here are usually called Kamrupi-montros; but in the south they are called Jharon-montros, and are composed in a mixture of the vulgar and polished languages. Both Muhammedans and Hindus acknowledge, that these incantations were first divulged by order of Kamakhya. Almost every person knows more or less of them, and the number of those who profess to repeat them for hire is very considerable, and may amount to 4 or 5 thousand. These persons in the vulgar language are called Roja, and in Sangskrita they are called Asurik chikitsok, that is unlawful physicians. And in fact they are not employed by any pure Hindu to cure any disease, except the small pox; but all ranks have recourse to their assistance to cure the bites of serpents, to cast out devils, and to inoculate their children; for the inoculators belong to this class of men, and, as I have formerly mentioned know no remedy except these incantations. They receive from 2 anas to 1 rupee from each person that is inoculated.

I have formerly given an account of the different kinds of devils, by which the natives imagine, that people are sometimes seized; and on inquiry, I found, that in general this was considered as a pretty common occurrence. In some divisions, however, none had been seen; while in Borovari it was stated, that no less than from 5 to 6 hundred persons were usually affected in the course of a year. Of six intelligent agents of Zemindars in Thanah Dimla, who were present when I asked the question, 5 said, that they had not





seen a person possessed, since they had been in the division, but one of these said, that he had seen possessed persons in other places. The fifth man said, that during his residence he had seen 4 possessed persons. They appeared to be delirious, talking a great deal of nonsense; and declared, that they were no longer men or women, but the spirits of such and such persons, who had died at such and such times. When the Raja had performed his ceremonies, the persons who had been afflicted fell down as dead, and their jaws were locked. Upon forcing open the teeth with a knife, and putting some ginger into their mouths, and pouring some holy water into their eyes, ears and mouths, they entirely recovered.

The Rajas are admitted to be in general successful; that is, when one fails another is tried, until the person recovers, and the devil is supposed to be banished. In some divisions it was said, that few have of late been affected, owing to the inundation of learned men from the south. In others the facility with which these troublesome companions were expelled, was attributed to their being of low birth; while in other places the people were very much afraid of them, and would not venture to call them devils (Bhut), but called them deities (Devatas) or Masan, a title which is often bestowed on the village gods. Rich people often give 5 or 6 rs. for casting out a devil.

The bites of serpents are cured in the name of Bishohori, and the small-pox in the name of Sitola; but other diseases and devils are usually removed in the name of Kamakhya, although the old nymph of the Tista sometimes lends her assistance. The Raja does not venture to provoke Bishohori by selling her favours; but on all other occasions he receives money, when he has had success. All the practitioners are common farmers or artists, and none can procure a subsistence by their mummery alone; but it often enables them to pay their rent at an enormous expense of lungs; for the forms of incantation are very long, and are chanted in full roar. In order to support this exertion, the Raja is always well fed, and for curing a disease may receive from 2 anas to 1 rupee. Many of the Rajas also pretend to a skill in herbs; but little confidence is placed on this part of their profession, which seems to be a judicious distinction, as the incantation can do



no harm; but in such hands the herbs may do a great deal. The principal skill of the Raja in the cure of diseases is supposed to consist in being able to discover the deity or saint (Pir), to whose influence the disease is owing, and the Rajas of both religions attribute diseases to both sets of beings, without any peculiar partiality in favour of their own objects of worship. When this discovery has been made, it is supposed as a matter of course, that the man will be cured, as the Raja knows the proper forms of prayer which never fail. When the patient therefore does not recover, it is not supposed to be owing to the inefficacy of the prayer; but to the practitioners having been mistaken in the cause, and that the disease has been owing to a different power from what he supposed; of course another man is employed.

The practice of medicine is at a low ebb. Fifty-three Hindus and four Muhammedans profess the art; but in general they are servants who attend rich families, receive monthly wages, and have no other practice. Those of the capital and chief towns may make from 10 to 15 rs. a month. On being first called to a wealthy patient, the physician usually receives 1 r. as a fee. If the patient dies, he gets no more; if the sick person recovers he usually makes an additional present. The physician is only allowed to charge the expense of the ingredients for medicines, which may account for the esteem, in which the virtues of gold and pearls are held among the practitioners of Bengal. Several of the Hindu physicians are Brahmans, and some are Kayosthos. Most of them are strangers, and none of them instruct pupils. One Pandit, however, who keeps a Chauvari, and professes grammar and law, is also acquainted with medicine, and instructs pupils in that science, which he does not practise.

Jadu or witchcraft, is supposed to be pretty commonly understood by the old women of this district, who are however chiefly employed by the young to secure the affections of their lovers. Goyalpara is considered as the chief place for this science, and many traders from the west country, who after having settled their business have continued there, until their whole means have been lavished on the wanton beauties of that vicinity, attribute their imprudence more to the effect of art than to that of beauty, which is rather uncivil, especially as the women of Kamrup have been long and highly celebrated





for their beauty by the people of Hindustan. (See Gladwin's *Ayeen Akbery*, vol. 2, p. 5.)

Jadu, it must be observed is a Hindu word, and in the language of Bengal this science is called Kugyagn. The means which the old dames of Kamrup use in their mummeries are in general, I believe, innocent enough, and consist chiefly in prayers to the goddess of desire (Kamakhya). It is said, however, that they use also herbs, and that the effect of these is often very prejudicial. This however is doubtful, the credulity of mankind usually magnifying exceedingly the effects of such practices.

It is not however to old women alone that the practice of witchcraft (Jadu) is confined. The sacred order possess also prayers which are included in the same science, and those of Kamrup, especially of the country called Bobruvan or Monipoor, are particularly famous, and in every part of Bengal are consulted to discover people's intentions, and private actions. This is sometimes applied to useful purposes in the detection of thefts; but usually is a mere device to fleece the ignorant. The practitioners of course never reside in one place longer than a few days, so that they may avoid all future communication with the simpletons, who have consulted them. I employed one of them for some time in forming a vocabulary of the language spoken at Monipoor; and I certainly never met with a creature of such extraordinary impudence, especially in detailing incredible stories, concerning the neighbouring countries, similar to those which we find in Pomponius Mela and other ancient writers. He assured me, that all the people of the country south from Monipoor have only one leg, and that he had seen several of them, who hopped very very fast by means of a stick. This, none of my people could swallow; but they were all perfectly acquainted with the history of Hairombo, the country west from Monipoor, and seemed surprised when I doubted of what the Brahman said. The people of that country, according to him, are mostly women. They keep only just as many men, as enables them to preserve the breed; and when there is no occasion for employing them in that manner, they are concealed in a deep cavern covered with much earth. The reason of this precaution is, that in Hairombo there is a terrible lion, the roar of which is so tremendous to men, that all who hear it imme-



diately die; but it has no bad effect on women. Although Brahmans possessed of this science are much employed, they are looked upon as condemned to eternal punishment in a future life, and that they are destined to be inhabitants of (Norek) hell. This the practitioners even acknowledge; although there is great reason to suspect, that not only they, but many of the lower classes of Brahmans have no belief in a future state. The reason assigned for the punishment is, that this species of knowledge is acquired by praying to a kind of devils called Paichas (Paisacha) of whom in my account of Mysore I have made frequent mention.

*Religions and Sects.*—According to the information which I received, the Moslems of this district are to the Hindus in the proportion nearly of 10 to 9; and in the different parts of the district the progress of the arts appears to me, to be nearly in proportion to the greater number of Muhammedans. The faith in Muhammed seems to be daily gaining ground, owing to converts who no longer could have been received in their original castes. The two religions appear to be on very friendly terms, and mutually apply to the deities or saints of the other, when they imagine, that supplications to their own have been ineffectual. This practice I know certainly extends to by far the greater part of Brahmans, Mollas and Fakirs, and I suspect, that we may include some Kazis and Pandits. Not that such persons make offerings with their own hands; but in belief of the existence and power of these objects of worship, they furnish the offerings that are presented by the proper persons. In my account of Chilmari, I have mentioned a place where persons of both religions bathe in common; and I find, that here as well as in every part of Bengal, there is an object of worship common to both. By the Hindus he is called Sotyo-Narayan, the true lord, and by the Moslems he is called Sotyo Pir, or the true saint. There is no image; but the Hindus make offerings of sweetmeats, and employ persons to read hymns in his praise. These hymns are composed in the poetical language of Bengal, and are read both by Brahmans and Sudras. The Moslems worship the same personage in a similar manner; but the hymns, which they read, are different.

*Muhammedans.*—The Muhammedan proprietors of assessed estates are more numerous in proportion than in





Dinajpoor, and the natives of Kamrup being somewhat indulgent, in most parts the followers of this law are able on grand occasions to regale themselves with beef; but it never constitutes a common article of diet, even with the most wealthy landholder.

The Kazis are in general very much respected, and the decency of their manners seems to entitle them to the esteem in which they are held. I am afraid however, that in point of literary or scientific acquirements their education, in most instances, has been too much neglected. Their jurisdictions are exceedingly unequal, which is attended with some inconvenience, as their deputies are seldom authorized to attest contracts, and are confined to the performance of the ceremonies of religion. In general indeed the deputies (Mollas) are of so low and uneducated a class of society, that their attestation to a written contract would be of little value, few of them being able to comprehend its meaning. In some parts however, where the jurisdiction is very extensive, a kind of superior deputies are appointed, who, although called by the same name, superintend the officiating Mollas of several parishes (Mohal). These deputies, however, are appointed more with a view of collecting the dues of the Kazi, than of assisting the Mollas in the execution of their duties, and are often called renters (Izaradars). Nor even in the most extensive jurisdiction (Serkar Koch Vihar) is it in every part that there is any intermediate agent between the Kazi and common Molla. In one large Pergunnah Bottrishazari there is no Kazi.

The Mollas are decent farmers, and are generally appointed by the Kazi according to the wish of the parishioners, or inhabitants of one or more manors (Dehas), that are united into one Mohal. For such persons the office is both honourable and profitable, and a Molla may in general make from 6 to 10 rs. a month, besides what he gives to the Kazi. In other places they make less, and are not even able to abstain from working with their own hands. Few of those who hold this respectable situation have an adequate education, none of them understand what they read, and many of them repeat without having a book. Their knowledge of the tenets of their religion is very confined, and their practise of its ceremonies is still more deficient; but, what is of more importance, they are



in general decent men in their behaviour, and much education is perhaps unnecessary, as the instruction of the people is not committed to their care, and their duty consists in reading prayers at circumcisions, marriages, funerals, and on the occasions when offerings are made to saints (Sirini).

The Fakirs in this district are pretty numerous; but in general are not much respected, although perhaps rather more than their conduct deserves. I must however say, that I seldom observed among them that affectation of piety so common in Dinajpoor, which is perhaps the reason of their being less in favour with the multitude.

I find among them several divisions, which probably exist also in Dinajpoor, although they escaped my notice. First, there are among them some called Benawas, who have abandoned their families, and all the pleasures of the flesh. These live at places called Tukiyas (pillows), to which there are endowments for their support, and they educate in the austere manner of their living some disciples (Chela), one of whom succeeds on the death of the chief, while the others are employed in begging and religious exercises. Such persons are exceedingly respected; but their number is very small, a separation from the sex being considered as intolerable.

Next, by far the greater part of Fakirs are married. Many of these also have endowments, both for their own support (Lakheraj), and for supplying the monument of a saint with a lamp (Cheragi) and with a canopy (Pirpal). In such families many of which are ancient, the persons seldom contaminate themselves by labour; but the number of endowments here are trifling when compared with those in Dinajpoor. The greater part of the Fakirs have no endowment, and ought to live upon alms; but, as in this district, alms are not bestowed with a sufficient liberality, the Fakirs have in general been under the necessity of working; and each family rents some land, which the subordinate members cultivate with their own hands, while the head of the family alone assumes the title of Fakir, and makes what he can by begging, and this is generally sufficient to pay his rent. Although this is a common practice, it is not considered proper, and it is admitted, that all the children of a Fakir ought to follow the pious example of their father; but the law does not absolutely require such an exertion. Those therefore who are more scrupulous, and





who do not find begging adequate for their support, rent land, and give it to people who cultivate for a share, while the whole men of the family beg. This is considered as a more honourable conduct.

The Fakirs who marry are of two sects, Dokurposh, and Madaris. I have not exactly learned the origin or nature of the distinction; but find that the Dokurposh are the most respected, and that the elevation to their dignity costs more money; for every Fakir must pay for his appointment. The appointment of a Dokurposh may cost from 2 to 5 rs., while a Madari in some places will be admitted for from 2 to 4 anas. These sums, although certainly not exorbitant, are in a great measure sufficient to prevent the order from being overwhelmed by multitudes, although there are many pretended Fakirs who beg without having been admitted into the order. Such persons are liable to be punished by the Kazi, and a great many of their children betake themselves to honest industry.

Among the Fakirs is also another order called Khonkar, whose particular object is to instruct the people in their duty, especially such as are to profess themselves Murids, or strict observers of the law. The number of these Khonkars is very small. The Fakirs perform no ceremony except that called Kulmap, which is performed when any person professes to become a Murid, and the instruction given is confined entirely to the time when the ceremony is performed. Neither Moslems nor Hindus, except towards Asam, seem to have any preachers.

Both sexes are admitted into the order of Fakirs; but not before the age of 17 or 18 years; and no person can be legally admitted, who has not previously made the profession of becoming a Murid; but none of them, except those who have relinquished the world (Benawa), even pretend to observe all the five grand points of the Muhammedan law, that is regular prayer, ablution, study of the Koran, pilgrimage, and fasting.

If the Fakirs, or teachers, do not even pretend to follow the law in these essentials, still less is it pretended that they are performed by those who are merely Murids. There are, however, both among Fakirs and Murids, a few who observe the five points of the law, and are called Talebs. These



never sacrifice to the Suktis, and probably in the whole district do not amount to 150 persons. All occasionally pray; but I believe scarcely any at the regular times appointed by the prophet; nor during the whole time that I was in the district did I once hear the people summoned to this duty by the shrill voice of the cryer. Ablution is totally disregarded, farther than touching the water with the point of the fingers once a day. More attention is paid to the Koran, if mere reading without understanding its meaning can be explained as a compliance with the will of the prophet; but this being a ceremony totally useless, and accompanied with a good deal of trouble, is diligently practised by many. I heard of only one ignorant Fakir who had penetrated to Mukah; but many perform pilgrimages to Punjton, near Asam, to Peruya in Dinajpoor, and to Mohasthangor in Nator, where some saint has erected a monument on the ruins of the abode of Porosuran. The fasts being highly inconvenient, and altogether useless, are mostly strictly observed. In this district, indeed, the chief things attended to are the fasts, the making offerings to the (Pirs) saints, and the commemoration of the unfortunate grandsons of the prophet with much gawdy pomp, tumult, and musical parade, which the convicts condemned to labour perform in a manner that far excels all others, both in magnificence, of show, and in intolerable din.

The monuments of pirs or saints are of two kinds, Durgahs or cenotaphs, and Kubers or tombs. At both indiscriminately offerings are presented. The orthodoxy of both offerings and commemoration of the grandsons of Muhammed is rather doubtful. The former savour of idolatry, and so does the latter, as in this country a kind of worship is paid on the occasion to emblems which represent God in the form of a human hand placed between a sun and moon. I have already mentioned the idolatrous compliance of the Moslems of this district with the worship of the Pagan gods, and here also they sometimes place rude images of horses at the monuments of saints. This practice, indeed, is not so common as in Dinajpoor; but I am afraid that this proceeds more from a want of artists than a sense of the impropriety of the custom.

In some parts of the district almost all the men and women of a proper age are admitted Murids, which is a source of





profit to both Kazi and Fakirs; in others very few are ambitious of the distinction. The becoming a Murid is analogous to receiving Upodes (instruction) among the Hindus. Although the Muhammedan women of low rank appear in public without veils, I did not hear that their husbands were addicted to overlook any looseness in their conduct; in this district the Hindus are more suspected of that weakness. In Asam the followers of Muhammed have departed so far from all appearance of the faith, that they are considered, by even those of this district as totally unworthy of the name of Moslem, and at Goyalpara, where some of them have settled, are called Bausiyas.

A tribe of fishermen, which has been converted to the faith, still retains in full force the doctrine of caste; and as members, neither eat, drink, nor intermarry with other Moslems. They are called Keyot. In some places I heard also of fishermen called Dengtiyas, who were in exactly a similar state; but I suppose this to be merely a different name for the same tribe.

The hord of Fakirs, which resided at Nidantora in the dominions of Gorkha, and infested this district and Dinaj-poor with its robberies, has lately been entirely dispersed. The military guards placed on the frontier prevented them from entering the Company's territory, so that when their ill-gotten wealth was expended, they began to pilfer in the neighbourhood. The Nepalese then set upon them, killed about forty, and totally dispersed the remainder, so that they have retired to some more convenient station. This horde, I am told, besides Fakirs, contained many Nagas or snakes, a description of rogues, who from going quite naked, close shaved, and well rubbed with oil, are so slippery, that no one can seize them, while they force their way with a dagger, pointed at both ends, and held by the middle.

*The Hindus.*—Although the followers of the Koran form a large proportion of the inhabitants of this district, there is little reason to suppose, that many of them are intruders. They seem in general, from their countenances to be descendants of the original inhabitants, who have been converted in a great measure, probably, by the intolerance of the Kings of Bengal. In the parts of the district, which were conquered by the Moguls, the original tribes have suffered



less; for, until the time of Aurungzebe the princes of the house of Timur were perfectly tolerant. In some parts, as Bottrishazari, the number of Moslems seems to have been owing to a sudden increase of cultivation. The Zemindar on the establishment of a regular government, invited strangers that were more accustomed to a settled life than his own tenants, who had long been in the habits of skulking from wood to wood; and his supply came chiefly from Dinajpoor, where most of the cultivators are followers of Muhammed. Another irruption of strangers has been made on the native inhabitants of this district, and consists chiefly of tribes that inhabited Bengal, when Bollal Sen settled the customs and rank of its castes. These, and some other strangers from the west and south of India, form rather more than a tenth part of the whole population, and their influence is much greater than the proportion of their number. I shall therefore proceed to give an account of them.

The earliest colony of the order reckoned sacred by the Hindus, that I can trace in this district, is that from Maithili, introduced by the Rajas of Komotapoor, probably in the thirteenth or fourteenth century of the Christian era. They are still pretty numerous in the north and west, and in Vihar, and retain the office of Purohit for the Raja of that country, and the property of some of the most beneficial temples. Here the Brahmans of this nation, who act as spiritual guides or priests for the lowest castes, or who officiate in temples are not disgraced; but very few of them enter into the service of men. I did not understand that any one of them taught any science, although some of them have the reputation of learning. They have many followers among the Sudras, both Rajbongsis and Khyen.

The next colony are of the Kanyokubjo nation, and are called Kamrupi Baidiks. They were introduced about the beginning of the sixteenth century by Viswo Singho; but whether directly from Kanyokubjo, or through Srihotto (Silhet R) does not seem to be clearly ascertained. At any rate they have entirely separated from the Srihotto Baidiks, and have adopted many customs peculiar to themselves. Few of them have as yet degraded themselves by receiving wages from men; but many officiate in temples, and act as instructors (Guru) and priests (Purohit) for impure tribes. By this,





however, they are not altogether disgraced; but their children become less marriageable, and the Brahmans of the south begin to call them Vornos, a distinction which was not known either to them or to the Maithilos. At present few of them are men of learning; but at one time they were profoundly skilled in Magic (Agom), and there is reason to suppose, that they were the publishers of a great many of the Tantras. Even now some of them instruct youth in the sciences. The women of these Brahmans are allowed great indulgence, and may become a legitimate kind of concubines, if their husband dies, or becomes a leper, or commits adultery, or dedicates himself to God, or finally if he is impotent. In the parts of the district, where the Hindu law is more strictly observed, these indulgencies are now considered as very blamable; but where the laws of Kamrup prevail, they are attended with no disgrace. The men of both the Maithilo and Kamrupi Brahmans do not incur excommunication by avowed connection with low women, and many are alleged to keep females of that class, veiled under the name of maid servants (Dasis).

Several Brahmans of the Paschatyo and Dakhyinatyo Baidiks, described in my account of Dinajpoor, have now settled in this district, but it is probable, that they have merely followed the five tribes of Bengalese Brahmans, who now are very numerous, and who from superior education and strictness of manners have acquired a great ascendancy. They are now the spiritual guides (Gurus) for the king of Asam and Rajah of Vihar, in accepting which offices they have made a stretch of conscience, and for the lucre of gain condescend to instruct these persons, both of whom, according to the doctrine of Bengal, are of the most impure origin. In fact the distinctions of purity are not strictly observed in Kamrup, and great sacrifices of dignity are made to wealth. Amidst such a mass of impurity, however, the Brahmans of the five tribes still preserve all the distinctions mentioned in my account of Dinajpoor, whenever some extraordinary temptation does not occur.

By far the greater part however of the five tribes have betaken themselves to human affairs, and occupy many offices in the administration of justice and police, in the collection of public revenue, and still more in the lucrative management of





private estates; but a large proportion of these are strangers, and live here without families. A large proportion also of the practitioners of medicine are Brahmans, who soon probably will engross the advantages of the medical tribe, as in a great measure they have already done those of the scribes, and astrologers. I have nothing to add to the observations made in Dinajpoor on the customs and subdivisions of this class, who seem to have been first introduced on the conquest by Hoseyn Shah, but who are rapidly increasing.

It must be observed, that the Brahmans of the Kaibortos, who in Bengal are called Vyasoktos, are here confounded with the Vornos, because the Kaibortos were only raised to the rank of purity by Bollalsen, whose ordinances do not extend to Kamrup. As however the Hindus of Bengal lead the popular opinion in all matters of purity, the Kaibortos here also are admitted to be pure, which produces the strange anomaly of their being considered higher or purer than their spiritual guides. A Brahman will drink the water drawn by a Kaiborto, while even a barber scorns to touch that of the Brahman, by whom the Kaiborto is instructed. Not only the Kamrupi and other Baidiks, and the Brahmans of the five tribes of the Kanyokubjo nation; but some persons of the same origin, who have assumed no other title, have settled in this district, and are instructors (Gurus) and priests (Purohits) to the few Rajputs and other western tribes of pure birth, that service has brought to Ronggopoor. The number is small, and some of them have betaken themselves to the profession of arms, and to agriculture.

There remain to be mentioned some smaller colonies of the sacred order. A few Brahmans of the Utkol nation, which occupies Urya (Orisa), and probably several adjacent countries. They were introduced after the middle of the eighteenth century by a native of that country, who acquired a fortune in the service of the Company, and who having purchased an estate, introduced a colony of his countrymen of different castes. These Brahmans have not entered into service, except one who administers oaths in the courts of justice, which is considered as a profession so infamous, that none of the Kanyokubjo nation can be found to undertake it. A few families of a kind of Brahmans from the west of India, called Bhuyihara or Zemindar Brahmans, have settled





in this district. I have nothing to add to what I said concerning them in treating of Dinajpoor.

On the whole the Kamrupis are the most numerous, next to these if not equal are the Barondros, next to these the Maithilos, and then the Rarhis. The number of the others is altogether inconsiderable. The whole number of the sacred order, may be about 6000 families, or about one forty-third part of the whole Hindu population.

Perhaps the head of one family in eight may officiate as an instructor (Guru) or priest (Purohit), or may have dedicated himself to study, which are the proper duties of their profession. Of these more than a half are allowed the high title of Pandit, to acquire which seems only to require a very slight knowledge of Sangskrita and of the Hindu law; but many of them can also note nativities (Thikogi) and sixteen or twenty may be able to calculate them (Koshthi), and these are called Jyotish. Not above three or four can construct an almanac, nor understand the profound science of chiromancy. Among these, who thus follow the duties of their profession, I have included even those, who have degraded themselves by a communication with the impure tribes, who are called Vornos, and who may amount to almost one-third of the whole.

Perhaps one-sixtieth part of the whole Brahmans, and some of these of the highest birth, without vainly troubling themselves with study, have preserved their purity, and live like the lily of the valley, trusting for a support to God, and to the casual charity of man. These are called Bhikhyuk. Some of them have a little free land, and all have houses where their families reside; but the men wander about begging from house to house. Besides his food, a man of this kind may procure from eighty to forty rupees a year, and this he gives to his family. Owing to their high birth, and dignified life, these are often courted by the Pandits for intermarriage.

Almost one-twentieth of the whole have been degraded by acting as servants in the temples (Pujaris); but in this country many of these, although not considered as equal to Pandits, or to the last-mentioned faithful class, are not inferior to those who have taken the service of men. About 1 Brahman in 300 may be an Ogrodani, and an equal number





may be a Ramayit, terms which I have explained in my account of Dinajpoor. No Brahman of the five tribes will here condescend to attend the funeral of a Sudra, and none have degraded themselves to the office of a Mornipora to read the services proper on such occasions; but the Maithilos and Kamrupis are not so scrupulous; and without any disgrace can attend the funeral of the great or rich. One Brahman in 300 may have dedicated himself to God, and lives secluded from the world; but all these are from the west of India; such conduct would not be suitable in a native of Kamrup. More than one half of the whole have betaken themselves entirely to the affairs of the world. Among these the Kamrupis and Maithilos very rarely accept of wages; but rent land, and support themselves by superintending its cultivation. The Barondros manage a large portion of the temporal affairs of the district, and perhaps one quarter of the whole are strangers, who on this account have come from the countries to the south. In this fourth part however, we must include the dependent relations, who follow the persons actually employed, and who act as servants and assistants. Few of these persons are accompanied by their wives; but their dependents form numerous families. The Kamrupis and Maithilos have no objection to declare the religious sect, to which they belong; but on that subject the Rarhis Barondros and Baidiks of Bengal observe the same silence as in their own country. In this district, however, controversy has risen to no height.

In giving an account of the different sects among the Brahmans, I consider myself fortunate in having met with Komolakanto, a Goswami of Ronggopoor, who among the natives has the highest reputation for learning, and for a knowledge in law and philosophy, and whose unaffected manners, and distinctness in answering any questions proposed to him, are perfectly becoming his high reputation. He says, that among the Brahmans here, as well as in all Bengal, there are only two sects, (Mots), that deserve notice, the numbers of the others being altogether inconsiderable.

That which is by far the most prevalent among the Brahmans is the Sakto Mot, the followers of which, without rejecting the Purans, follow, as their chief guide, the books called Tantras, which, it is supposed, were composed by the





God Sib, for the instruction of his wife Parboti, at the very commencement of the Sotyo-Yugo, or earliest age of the Hindu chronology.

This sect has divided into three branches, Divyobhav, Posubhav, and Virbhav. Although the Tantras were composed at so early a period, for a long time it was to only a chosen few, that they were divulged. These select persons were the Munis of ancient days, to whom ordure was equally acceptable as the most pure food. The history of these persons being involved in the darkest obscurity, we may be allowed to consider even the existence of this branch of the sect as somewhat problematical, especially as it is in very modern times, that the doctrine of the Tantras appears to have been divulged to the ordinary race of sinful mortals; for although the Goswami says, that the Posubhav' was always followed by some Brahmans, I can learn of no person, who has acquired any celebrity in explaining its doctrines earlier than Krishnanondo, commonly called Agomvavis, a Brahman of Nodiya, who, according to Komolakanto, lived about the middle of the sixteenth century. His doctrine, called both Posubhav and Dokhyinachar, is that followed by far the greater part of the Brahmans of Bengal. The worship of this branch of the sect is not lawfully accompanied by the five indulgences, which will be mentioned as in use among the Virbhav. No person can without great incivility ask a Brahman of Bengal, whether he is of the Posu or Virbhav; but I have strong reason to think, that most of those who would wish to be thought Posu, very frequently accompany their worship by some of these indulgences, and satisfy their consciences by considering, that the worship of the Virbhav' should on all occasions be accompanied by the whole, and that any thing short of the complete number is perfectly consistent with the doctrine of Agomvavis.

About 50 years after the time of that learned person a Brahman of Katiyal in Moymonsing named Bromanondo Giri published in Kamrup the doctrine called Virbhav or Barmachar. The worship of the goddess according to this doctrine ought to be accompanied with five offerings, spirituous liquor (Modyo) flesh (Mangso) fish (Motsyo) parched grain (Mudra) and women (Maithon). The offering is made to the deity; but as usual the votary enjoys the things that





have been offered. This worship is attended with some circumstances, that render it difficult to perform with propriety on all occasions, so that few attempt to follow it throughout, or to adopt entirely the doctrine of Ramanondo.

Komolakanto seems to me not to have allowed quite a sufficient antiquity for the time when the two great Doctors of the Sakto sect flourished. The Moslems took possession of the Eastern half of Kamrup about the year 1603, and in the fall of its prince Porikhyit the science of the Brahmans seems to have received a fatal overthrow. It is probable, however, that Brohmanondogiri flourished at the court of Porikhyit, in which case he must have divulged his doctrines towards the end of the 16th century, 20 years perhaps earlier than the time assigned by Komolakanto; but in Hindu chronology, even of the most recent events, a difference of 20 years may be considered as nothing.

According to Komolakanto the other sect (Mot) is that of the Vaishnov, who follow chiefly as their guide the works of Vyas. On this account the two sects are sometimes called Baidiks and Tantriks; but it must be observed, that by far the greater part of the Brahmans of Bengal, who are called Baidiks, follow in reality the doctrines of the Tantras. The work of Vyas, by far the most commonly studied in Bengal, is the Sribhagvot. I am aware, that a most excellent authority, Mr. Colebrooke, considers this as a work of Vopodev; but Komolakanto will not allow that to be the case, and alleges, that only a commentary on the original work was composed by that person. It is therefore much to be wished, that the learned gentleman, to whose opinion I have alluded, would favour the public with his reasons for believing Vopodev to have been the author of this work, as it contains many passages, that would throw great light on the history of India, should it prove to be a genuine work of Vyas, who is generally allowed to have been contemporary with Yudhishtir, and who may be considered as the principal founder of the pagan religion, that is now most prevalent.

No schisms nor teachers of any note seem to have arisen among the followers of Vyas until the time of Songkor, who is reckoned by the Vaishnov of Bengal as one of their great doctors, and according to Komolakanto founded the congregation (Somproda) called Rudro. Nearly contemporary with





him lived Udoyonachariyo who having confuted the Buddhists in a treatise called Kushomangjoli, now commonly taught in the schools, put many of these heretics to death.

Immediately after these two great doctors; but at what interval is not exactly known, there arose in this congregation a celebrated person named Vishnu swami, who was born at Joynogor, and divulged doctrines, that occasioned a schism, and the congregation split into two called Gyangn and Bhagvot, who differ concerning the essence of God, the one considering him as endowed with a body, and the others denying the truth of this doctrine.

In Kamrup there are no persons except a few Sonnyasis that belong to these congregations. The doctrine of the Srisomproda or holy congregation was first taught in private by the goddess Lokhymi, wife of Narayon, and was delivered by tradition from one holy man to another, until made public by Ramanuj, as I have mentioned in my account of Mysore. According to Komolakanto this great teacher lived in the 11th or 12th centuries of the christian era, which agrees very well with the accounts, which I received in the south of India. His only followers in this district are a few Ramayits from the west of India, and these worship only Ram Krishno and Hanuman.

Two years after Ram Anuj was born Madhov, whom in my account of Mysore, from the vulgar pronunciation of Karnata, I have called Madual. He originally was a pupil of Songkor, which ascertains nearly the era of that great personage. Having differed from his master concerning the seat of the life or soul, he went to Bodrikasrom or Bodorinath, near the source of the Ganges, in order to consult Vyas, who is usually believed, to be still alive at that place; but this Komolakanto does not credit, and says, that there was then, as there is now, merely an image, to which Madhov prayed. The image then instructed him in the doctrine, which he afterwards taught, and which was first revealed by Narayon to Brahma, and by him to Narod, by whom it was communicated to Vyas. All the Goswamis of Bengal belong to the congregation of Madhov. In my account of Dinajpoor I have already mentioned the three teachers who have propagated this doctrine in Bengal. Odwaito, the ancestor



of Komolakanto, was born in Susonggo in the year of Sak 1155 (A.D. 123  $\frac{2}{3}$ ), so that some Barondro Brahmans must have penetrated into Kamrup, about the time of the Komstapur Rajas, although in all probability it was long after, that their establishment became numerous, at least in the part included within the limits of this district. Odwaito left his native place, and after having studied under Madhovendropuri, who lived near Jogomath, he established his residence at Santipoor in a more civilized part of the country. Nityanondo, the second great doctor of this congregation in Bengal, was born in the year of Sak 1406 (A.D. 148  $\frac{3}{4}$ ) at Kherdo near Barrackpoor. Chaitonyo, the third great teacher, was born a year afterwards at Nodiya. The whole history of the Goswanis of Bengal is contained in the book called *Gonoddes dipika*, composed by Kovikornopoor a learned physician of Mahes near Srirampoor (Serampoor R), to which I may refer those who are desirous of a farther investigation.

The last founded congregation among the sect (Mot) of Vaishnov was established by the doctrine of Nimbak, a Brahman of the west of India, who lived shortly after the time of Madhov. This congregation is usually called *Sonoksomproda*, and its members are called *Nimayit Vaishnov*. A few of them are scattered throughout Bengal, and there are two or three convents (*Akras*) in this district; but according to Komolakanto none of them possess any learning.

The unity that was long preserved among the followers of Vyas, and the numerous schisms, that suddenly arose after the overthrow of the Buddhists by Udoyon and Songkor, appear to me a proof, that the doctrines of the Purans had long met with formidable opposition, and had made slow progress in overcoming the heretical sects; for I know of no circumstance, that can unite people in professing one uniform belief, except an inquisition. Nor any thing, that can prevent those who think differently from squabbles, but the danger of their being altogether overwhelmed by external violence; and in such cases the most slender link will unite men, who in other circumstances would have the greatest satisfaction in cutting each others throats. Papists and protestants join cordially against Turks or Infidels, and I have





no doubt, that Hindus and Muhammedans would unite with the utmost steadiness, were an attempt made by foreigners to invade the opinions of either.

Besides the Brahmans I have estimated, that in this district there are almost 50,000 families of Hindus, which are not of tribes, that originally belonged to Kamrup. By far the greater part of these belong to the castes, which are supposed to have belonged to Bengal at the time when Bollalsen established the respective ranks, which they now hold, and of which I have given some account in treating of Dinajpoor. These, it will be needless to recapitulate, and I shall only add a few occasional remarks. Of the two castes, that in Bengal form an intermediate link between the Brahmans and Sudras, the number is small.

The Astrologers (Daivoggno) are both the highest in rank, and the most numerous, for it is said they amount to about 300 houses. I have already explained the state of knowledge among this class. These wise men inform the lower classes of the time that is fortunate for commencing all sorts of undertakings of consequence; but the profits from hope not being sufficient, they have recourse to operations on the passion of fear. The manner in which many of them proceed is, I am told, as follows. They go to an ignorant creature, and inform him, that such or such a misfortune is impending. He asks how it may be avoided, and they reply by performing such or such ceremonies. The man performs these; and if the misfortune does not arrive, he thinks himself bound to make the Daivok a present. The higher class of people laugh at this folly and consult the Jyotish. The common Daivoks, partly by such tricks, partly by mere begging, make from two to three rupees a month. One Pandit, not contented with fleecing the higher ranks, has begun to make encroachments on even the deceits which the Daivoggno practise on the vulgar. His conduct is, however, blamed. The Daivoks who can construct almanacs are considered as such phenomenons of learning that they are consulted even by the highest ranks.

The Bards (Bhat) may amount in number to one third of the astrologers. They do not celebrate the heroes or saints of former times; that would afford little reward, and is practised by the lowest orders. The Bards more prudently





confine themselves to describe the manners of the present day, and deal both in praise and satire; they push themselves forward on all public occasions to solicit favour, and in the vehemence and veracity with which they praise those who give, and blame those who refuse, they probably equal any professor of the flowery art, although their manner may be somewhat different from that of Greece and Rome, and probably would not suit the cold imagination of European critics. Most of them rent land and employ people to labour it, while the productions of their genius enable them at least to pay their rent.

The Medical tribe (Baidyo) are not numerous, and few of them have a medical education. About 25 families have settled in the district in various employments, and about an equal number may have come from other districts for temporary services, partly as physicians, and partly as priests, for they are the spiritual guides of Raja Horinath Kumar, one of the chief Zemindars of this district.

It is difficult to ascertain the number of the true Kayosthos that are in this district; because a numerous tribe called Kolita, who once had great sway here, as they still have in Asam, have in the more civilized parts assumed the title of Kayostho, and conceal their descent from the Kolitas with as much care as the Raja of Vihar does his origin from a Koch. The pure scribes of Bengal may be 2000 families, of whom one half may have taken up a fixed residence in the district, and the remainder are here engaged in business, partly mercantile, partly in the service of Government, and partly as agents of Zemindars. Those who have fixed abodes follow the same employments, so far as they are qualified; but the greater part are renters of land, although none employ their hands in labour; they are mostly of the division called Uttor-Rarhi, and these are offended at being called Sudras, although they have not yet pretended to be of royal extraction. There also are many who are called Barondro Kayosthos; but these are of very dubious origin, and many of them cultivate with their own hands. Two of the most respectable families of Zemindars, Bordhonkuthi and Kangkinya, are of this kind; but there is reason to suspect that they are Kolitas, as in the division established by Bollalsen there is no mention of such a class.





The nine tribes of artists (Novosakh) included among the pure Sadras by Bollalsen are far from being numerous, and are chiefly confined to the southern extremity of the district, from whence the original inhabitants seem in a great measure to have been expelled. In Kamrup there was no distinction of caste arising from a difference of profession, and all the trades, with which its inhabitants were acquainted, continue to be practised by all persons, Koch and Moslems indifferently, who are coppersmiths, cultivators of betle, weavers, makers of garlands, blacksmiths, and potters. But three of the nine arts having been unknown, namely, druggists, workers in shell, and barbers, the whole of these professions are filled by Bengalese. The number of the two former is totally insignificant; but the barbers are numerous, and having spread through every part of Kamrup, form by far the most numerous class of the Novosakh, which has settled in that country. These gentlemen have assumed no small degree of consequence, and will not condescend to smooth the chin of any fellow, who has not received instruction from the pure lips of a Brahman; an exception, however, is made in favour of the Moguls and English, the liberality with which both reward services, having occasioned a considerable relaxation of conscience. The other trades are, however, beginning to extend, and the artists being more skilful than the rude workmen of Kamrup, are gradually increasing in number. The whole at present may be about 6000 families. Among these it is remarkable that there is scarcely one weaver who follows his trade, although theirs is the art in which the Bengalees have made the greatest progress.

Of the classes of Bengal which are admitted to be pure Sudras; but which are not included in the nine trades, there are in this district the following:—Sodgop, commonly called Chasa-Goyalas, who although properly tenders of cattle, have betaken themselves to agriculture; they are reckoned a very pure caste. Aguri, a tribe which makes pretences to be of the Khyotryo dignity. Teli, traders in salt and grain; many of the chief traders of the district belong to this caste. Tamoli, or Tambuli, should retail betle; but they deal also in salt and grain; they are not so wealthy nor numerous as the Teli. Moyra, a very few. The Saphaligop,





all tend cattle and prepare milk ; they are not numerous, and say, that they are the same with the Pollobgop of the other parts of Bengal.

The whole of these are very trifling in number, and do not exceed 600 houses, chiefly Teli and Tamolis, and few even of these have brought their families, or have taken up a fixed residence in the country.

In fact, the chief part of the pure Hindus of Bengal, that have settled in this district, are the dubious tribe of Kaibortos, who may occupy about 28000 houses. Their religious instructors (Gurus) are here reckoned Vornos, except in the southern extremity, where the manners of Bengal entirely prevail, and where they receive the title of Vyasokto. The Kaibortos of the south are sometimes called Keyot, which they consider as a grievous affront; but in this country there are some Hindus who call themselves Keyot, and on the strength of the name given to the others as a reproach, claim to be of the same tribe, and it is not improbable, that Keyot may have been the original name, and is barbarous, while Kaiborto, a Sangskrita name may have been adopted, when Bollalsen raised the tribe to the rank of purity. The Keyot of Kamrup, like the Kaibortos, are divided into two classes; the one called Heluya, from cultivating the ground, retains the worship of Krishno; the others are fishermen, and without having relinquished their name or profession, have entirely become followers of Muhammed, yet they keep themselves distinct as a caste, and will not eat the rice prepared by another Moslem, nor do the two classes intermarry. The former Keyots are not numerous, and are chiefly confined to the eastern parts of this district and Asam.

Of the impure tribes of Bengal who are not altogether vile; but who are called Nich, there are in this district the following:—Sonarbenya, or money-changers, are not numerous in any part, and in many there are none, nor any person who follows the profession; perhaps in all 200 families. Sakra, or Goldsmiths, very few persons of native tribes, and the sons of prostitutes in general carry on this trade. There is not on the whole above 20 families. Sutrodhor, or carpenters, have also gained little ground, the business being chiefly carried on by native tribes of all kinds; there may be





300 houses. Barondro Sau, traders in salt and grain, are pretty numerous, and some of them are rich; there may be in all 500 houses.

Gones, potmakers. Although on the authority of the Pandit I have placed these among the tribes of Bengal, I am extremely doubtful concerning his accuracy. This tribe is confined to the northern parts of Dinajpoor, and the adjacent parts of this district, which were not included in the Hindu kingdom of Bengal, and I am apt to suspect that they are of one of the original tribes of Motsyo Des. There may be about 50 houses.

Kolu, or Teli, oil-makers. The number does not exceed 200 houses, the business being chiefly carried on by Rajbongsis, Muhammedans, and other native tribes.

Jhalo, fishermen of the Kaiborto caste, not above a hundred houses. Malo, another caste of fishermen, who seem to have a great affinity with the Dom and Patonis that make baskets, a tribe that is extremely vile, and it may be worth while to trace the affinity, as tending to explain the origin of castes. The word Patoni, I understand, implies a good workman, and is applied to two very numerous tribes in Bengal. One, of which I am now treating, is called Malo Patoni or ferrymen, and contains a great number of people, especially on the banks of the river above Calcutta. They are fishermen, and do not use any thing, which the Brahmans consider as grossly impure. The other tribe is called Dom Patoni, and in Dinajpoor is exceedingly numerous. Dom implies a basket maker, and in fact the people of this tribe of Patonis make baskets, and are exceedingly impure. They are often merely called Dom, as the ferrymen are often called merely Malos. There is in this district another tribe called Dom, for what reason I cannot say, unless it is that they are considered as having a common origin with the Patoni fishermen, and that these were originally basket makers. They disclaim the name Dom, and call themselves Nodiyal as living on rivers, and in fact they are fishermen like the Malos, or Patoni fishermen of Bengal; but I believe that they are of an original tribe of Kamrup. In Asam they are very numerous, and a few years ago overthrew the government of that country; but in this district there are only a few, and these are confined almost entirely to the vicinity of Goyalpara. It is chiefly the women





of this tribe, that are the syrens, by whose spell the Hindu merchants trading with Asam are bewitched, and from whose clutches they often do not escape, until both capital and credit are completely exhausted. The husbands are the most patient creatures in the world, and it is probably in order to enhance the value of their charms, that this tribe observes all the rules of purity in eating and drinking with a greater strictness than even the highest Brahmans of Bengal. Notwithstanding this they have not procured a Brahman for a spiritual guide (Guru); but follow the instructions of the Kolitas of Kamrup. What may be the case in Asam I cannot say, but at Goyalpara at least they have nothing of the Chinese features, and are rather handsome; but considering the manners of their women little can be inferred from their features, concerning the origin of the tribe. The fishermen of this kind including Malo and Nodiyal may amount to 1000 houses.

The Gangrar are a tribe of fishermen, originally from the vicinity of Dhaka, of whom about 200 families have settled in this district on the banks of the Brohmoputro. They do not use a net; but strike otters, porpoises, crocodiles, tortoises and large fish with various kinds of spears, in the use of which they are very dexterous, as will be hereafter described. They also have fast rowing boats, in which they are employed to carry messages, and to act as guards; for the robbers, who swarm on the river, dread the spear of the Gangrar, and seldom venture to attack them or any boats, that are under their protection. Those who have lately come from Dhaka are tolerably pure feeders, and have a Brahman for their guide in religion. Their widows are permitted to become concubines. They make frequent sacrifices of a particular species of river tortoise (Jat Kachhim) to a female deity called Kolokumari (the daughter of the deep), which seems to be peculiar to the vicinity of Dhaka. She has Brahman Pujaris, and her image is half black half white. She is represented with two arms. This kind of tortoise is the only sacrifice, that she will receive, and she occasions sickness to all those who neglect to make offerings. These Gangrar sell only tortoises and otter skins, and eat themselves all the fish which they catch. Some Gangrars, who have been long settled in Kamrup, sell fish, and have betaken





themselves to eating pork and drinking strong liquors. The two classes of course neither eat together nor intermarry, and Brahmans refuse instruction to the impure feeders. Of the Bayuri who prepare rice and sweetmeats there are about 100 houses; but many persons belonging to tribes of Kamrup follow the same profession. The Rarhi-Sau, who distil, are very few in number.

Kopali, who make umbrellas, and the Koyali who work in sackcloth, ropes and mats, manufacture only a very small proportion of what is made in the country. Their manners here are not so impure as in Dinajpoor. They have Brahmans, who act as their spiritual guides, and must be considered as belonging to this class of Hindus. In Dinajpoor I was also misinformed in supposing, that these were two names for one caste. The people here say, that they have no communion, although they are nearly of the same rank. The Kopali are very few in number, not above 30 houses. The Koyali may amount to 420. The tribes which are considered as totally vile, and of a Bengalese origin are as follows.

Dhola or washermen. Their art not having been practised as a trade in Kamrup, the washermen are as generally diffused as the barbers; but still are not in great demand, and do not exceed 360 houses. The Chondal are a very impure tribe of fishermen, of whom there may be 2500 houses. The Dom Patonis already mentioned may amount to 1200 houses, and no person of a Kamrupi tribe interferes with their occupation of making baskets, which seems to have been unknown.

The Bhumimalis are not near so numerous as in Dinajpoor, and both divisions of gardeners and sweepers included, do not exceed 2500 houses. I have followed the Pandit in placing them among the tribes of Bengal as established by Bollalsen, although I have some doubt concerning his accuracy. I find, that he depends only on the profession of one of the divisions, the Chhotobhaga or sweepers, being the same with that of the Hudo or Hari, who no doubt were the sweepers of Bengal. This does not appear to me a sufficient proof, and I am inclined to think, that the Bhumimali, who are most numerous in the northern parts of Dinajpoor are one of the original tribes of that country, which were not included within the kingdom of Bengal, until after the per-





secution by Jalaludin, and by that means have been preserved. In some parts of this district this caste are in possession of the art of making baskets. The Muchi, or tanners and shoemakers, have retained a complete monopoly in their business, which seems to have been unknown to the people of Kamrup. They may amount to 320 houses. These are all the persons, who belong to tribes, which are supposed to have appertained to the Hindu kingdom of Bengal, and some of these I have reduced to this class with much doubt. The following tribes, that have come from other parts of India, have now settled in this district.

There are a few, who pretend to be Khyotriyos. They are mostly employed as guards, and have been born in the west of India. Very few have made a permanent settlement. The Rajputs are rather more numerous, and are employed in the same manner; but some have brought their families, and have settled. The Kurmi, who belong to a pure tribe of cultivators from the country near Patna (Magodhodes), are employed in the same manner; none have settled. The Haluyikors, or confectioners of the west of India, have settled in very small numbers. Two tribes, who deal in milk and cattle, have come in considerable numbers, and are called Nondagop and Mongjishthagop. They are both pure. Some Sudras of Kotok have obtained a permanent settlement, and considerable wealth. They are of several different castes, which it will not be necessary to specify. The whole of these tribes, that are pure, may amount to 1400 families. The impure tribes are more numerous. The Gungri are fishermen of a tribe, which is said to have come from the west of India, and of which about 90 families have settled in this district. They drink spirituous liquor; but abstain from the abomination of wine. They say, that most of them were brought by the Moguls; but some have settled here since the commencement of the English government.

The Yogis or Jogis amount to about 1200 houses. A few are weavers; but more of them support themselves by burning lime, by begging, and singing the poems, which celebrate Gopichondro. Some also have very reluctantly betaken themselves to agriculture. I have already mentioned the probability, that these Yogis were the priesthood of the country during the dynasty, to which Gopichandro belonged.





Haripa the Guru of Moynawoti is said to have been the pupil of Kanipa, the pupil of Gorokhyonath a very holy man, who according to the Tantras is supposed to be still on earth; but is an object of worship especially in Nepal, as he is the tutelary diety of the reigning family. Except the aversion to labour, and inclination to beg, the Yogis retain nothing of their original profession. It would appear, that formerly the Yogis had great authority, as they were always stiled Nath (Lord or Proprietor), and even in their present misery, they still assume this title.

The Yogis from their professions have separated into two branches which neither eat together, nor intermarry. The one called Heluya are weavers and cultivators, and their women dye thread, and retail turmeric, capsicum and other seasonings. Of their customs I have learned little, as in this district their number is small. The other branch is called Thelaya. These seem to retain their customs entire, as they live as much as possible by begging and the idle art of rehearsing cyclic poems, to which as their claims for alms are not great, they add the art of making lime from shells, and a very few have betaken themselves to the plough. These Yogis in the opinion of the Hindus are impure feeders, and they drink spirituous liquor. They also bury the dead, which is a very strong confirmation of the tradition concerning their having been the priests of the country during the dynasty, to which I have alluded, as Horischondrospat is undoubtedly a tomb, and could not have belonged to any prince, who followed the present customs of the Hindus. The building discovered by Mr. Tucker which I have described in my account of Lalbazar in Dinajpoor, is also evidently a tomb, and is in the immediate vicinity of the abode of the princes Pal family, which together with Dhormo Pal, the name of the founder of the dynasty of this district, which I suppose to have followed the instruction of the Yogis, may serve to connect the history of the two families. Both are said to have come from the west of India, and to have claimed the high birth of Khyotriyos, and the Yogis are said to have come from the same quarter. It is said, that in their native country the Yogis were brought into discredit by Songkor the great doctor of the Bráhmans, which is not at all improbable. The Palas are usually said to have been Buddhists,





and the Yogis may have been some branch of that sect, which appears to be the religious doctrine, that has extended farthest among mankind; but it must be observed, that in Bengal every heretical sect is included under the odious name of Buddha, and therefore the tradition in fact only implies, that the Palas and Yogis were not orthodox. The reason assigned by the Brahmans for Songkors having destroyed the Yogis is, that they were his pupils, who studied for some time with the submission due to their illustrious teacher; but finally betook themselves to drinking, and had the impudence to plead his example as an excuse, just as if they were permitted to do, whatever was allowable in a person of his extraordinary sanctity. The Theluya Yogis have in general no connection with the Brahmans, and have among them certain families, which still abstain from all labour, and are entirely dedicated to God. Although these persons marry, they are called Sannyasis. They have no books, and their learning consists in some forms of prayer, which they have committed to memory, and repeat on different occasions. These act as the religious instructors (Guru) and priests (Purohits) of the labouring classes. I understand, that among the Yogis who are weavers some of the Sannyasis are men deeply versed in Sangskrita lore. The burners of lime who adhere to their Sannyasis pray to Sib, and offer sacrifices to all the gods of villages. Some however pray to Boloram and Krishno, and have received instruction (Upodes) from a person called an Odhikari; but so sunk are they in ignorance, that they do not know whether this instructor is a Brahman or a Vaishnov.

In the N.W. of this district are settled about 100 families of an impure tribe called Chapal, who are weavers. I have not not learned any thing of their history. Bede is a tribe of the utmost impurity, neither is it certain to what country or sect it belongs. The Bedes live by gelding animals, making drums, catching snakes, performing hocus pocus tricks, and as much as possible by begging, which it is alleged they often assist by theft. There may be in this district about 460 families of this miserable race. The Bedes bury the dead and mourn 10 days. They eat beef, (carrion) pork and all other abominable things. Their marriages are accompanied by a feast; but no person officiates as a priest. They





are allowed only one wife, and never divorce them. No one is expelled from the caste; but, if a person breaks through any custom, he must give an entertainment. The chief object of their worship is a male spirit called Mosan, who accepts the blood of sacrifices. As this deity seems to be peculiar to this part of the country, we might perhaps conclude, that the Bedes are an aboriginal tribe; but concerning this I shall suspend my opinion, until I have learned the customs of those, which live in other districts; for they are spread throughout every part of Bengal.

The Telengga are a caste much like the Bedes. They have no priest of any kind, nor any form of prayer, and they worship chiefly Mosan. They drink spirituous liquors; but do not eat pork nor beef. They live as much as they can by begging, and making a noise with drums, but also deal in cattle, and snare birds. They have a tradition of having come from the west of India, and their name would imply their being of Andra or Telingana, that is of the country near Hyderabad; but they know nothing of their extraction. They do not intermarry with another tribe called Noliya, which lives nearly in the same manner; but the Nolias also mend copper vessels, and derive their name from taking birds by means of a rod smeared with birdlime. They sometimes go to the forests, and collect peacock feathers, with which they form fans, implements for driving away flies, and umbrellas which are suspended over the images of the gods. Of both kinds of these poor creatures, there may be, in this district, about 200 families.

There is another tribe named Bakor, the origin of which is extremely uncertain; but which also resembles in manners the gipsies of Europe. The Bakor fish with rods, and go from house to house playing on some musical instruments, and begging. About 100 families wander through this district. There are about 40 families of Jullad, who like the Mordah-furash of Calcutta remove dead carcasses, and are public executioners. They are a tribe from the west of India, and wherever they have been introduced, the sweepers refuse to perform these offices, which was a part of their duty. These Jullad are considered as the very lowest dreg of abomination.

In the next place I proceed to give an account of the



tribes, which appear to me to be aboriginal of Kamrup, and to be strongly characterized by their features, as belonging to the great eastern race of mankind. In this district by far the most numerous and important of these tribes, by the Asamese, Nepalese, and by all such Bengalese as are not under the influence of their chiefs, is called indiscriminately Koch and Rajbongsi, and the subdivisions and distinctions, which they themselves have introduced, are considered as effusions of vanity, and of no importance, the whole being thought low and impure. This opinion, as naturally might be expected, is exceedingly disagreeable to their chiefs, and especially to their princes, who pretend to a divine origin, and many of them observe the Hindu law with such purity, that in their own territory, at least, they are allowed to be real Sudras, and the Maithila and Kamrupi Brahmans admit them to be such; but the Bengalese hold them in the utmost contempt. I have no doubt, however, that all the Koch are sprung from the same stock, and that most of the Rajbongsis are Koch; but I am inclined to think, that many of the former are of different tribes, and having abandoned their impure practices, have been admitted to a communion. In fact there is reason to suppose, that until very lately, the different tribes of Kamrup permitted intermarriage. Thus, it must be observed, that Koch Hajo, the valiant chief who seems to have expelled the Moslems from the northern parts of this district, married his daughter to the Mech Herya, and from this marriage, with the doubtful assistance of the god Sib, are sprung the very principal chiefs of the Rajbongsis. There is also reason to believe, that Mohiram Chaudhuri of Mechpara is descended from the tribe called Rabha. Such at least is the tradition privately given among his people; but he himself, as usual, pretends to be descended of the Khyotriyos, who escaped from the violence of Porosuram by flying to Chin'. He only, however, would mention a few of his ancestor's names, as I suspect, because on remounting to a distant period, as in the Vihar family, we should come to names totally barbarous. In the Sangskrita language of the Tantras, the Koch are called Kuvach, and by their neighbours the Kachharis they are called Hasa.

One tribe of Koch remains in a very rude state of society, and its members are still thinly scattered over all the north-