

Governance Through Justice: Crime and Punishment in the Ahom Era

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Abstract

The regulatory and administrative structure of the Ahom dynasty decisively shaped the socio-political landscape before British annexation. While existing scholarship has primarily examined their political achievement, military power, and administrative efficiency, the legal practices, punishments, and mechanisms of justice under the Ahoms remain comparatively under-researched. Questions about what constituted crime, how punishments were decided, and how justice was delivered remain largely unanswered. Although primary sources such as the Buranjis contain references to legal matters and punishments, the available information remains scattered and lacks a comprehensive analysis. This research seeks to collect, organise, and examine such sources to construct a clear and systematic understanding of the Ahom justice system. By doing so, it aims to highlight how laws and punishments reflected the social and political order of the time and to contribute new insights to the study of pre-British Assam.

Keywords: Justice, Crime, Punishment, Annexation, Ahom Era

Introduction

The Ahom dynasty, which ruled Assam from 1228–1826, was one of the longest-lasting political powers in northeastern India. For nearly six centuries, the Ahoms established a distinctive system of governance that shaped the political, administrative, and cultural fabric. Their contribution to state formation, military strategies, and cultural assimilation has received considerable attention from historians. However, the legal and judicial dimensions of their administration remain comparatively underexplored.

Law and justice formed a crucial part of Ahom governance, ensuring the stability of society and the smooth functioning of the state. The way the Ahoms defined crimes, imposed punishments, and delivered justice reflected not only their administrative efficiency but also the socio-political values of the time. Yet scattered references in sources such as the Buranjis and royal chronicles don't provide a systematic account of the justice system. As a result, important questions remain unanswered: what actions were regarded as crimes under Ahom rule? How were punishments determined and enforced? Which institutions or officials were responsible for delivering justice? And how did customs, traditions, and royal authority shape

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legal practices? Studying these aspects is significant because it provides valuable insights into indigenous governance before the advent of colonial rule.

Review of Literature

To understand the timeline and significance of the proposed topic, several informative sources such as international journals, archival materials, and Buranjis (Ahom chronicles) have been examined. The topic of crime and punishment during the Ahom period has received limited but valuable attention from historians. While several scholars have studied the administrative and political system of the Ahoms, a focused analysis of crime and penal practices remains relatively underdeveloped.

H. K. Barpujari, in his multi-volume work *Comprehensive History of Assam*, particularly in Volume II, provides important references to crime and punishment during the Ahom period (1228–1826). Although his description is not exclusively centered on criminal justice, it offers valuable insights into the legal and administrative systems of the Ahoms and the methods of justice delivery. Barpujari discusses the role of the king, types of crimes, methods of punishment, and the influence of customary and oral laws, along with the impact of Hinduism and local traditions. His work helps to understand the pragmatic and flexible nature of Ahom justice, which was deeply rooted in both tradition and royal authority.

Barpujari mentions that common crimes during that period included theft, treason, rebellion, adultery, and corruption. Acts of disloyalty to the king or conspiracies against the state were considered severe crimes and were often punished by execution or exile. Other punishments included fines, confiscation of property, public humiliation, and imprisonment. In some cases, even family members of traitors were punished. Law enforcement was carried out by officials such as the Borphukan, Borbarua, Rajkhowa, and other Paik officers. With the spread of Vaishnavism, certain reforms were introduced in the justice system. Justice was not codified in a modern sense but was largely based on customs, traditions, and royal decrees.

Priyam Goswami, in his book *The History of Assam*, presents a more socio-cultural analysis of Ahom rule and discusses how criminal behavior and justice mechanisms were linked to the centralized administrative framework and the Paik system. According to Goswami, the Swargadeo (Ahom king) acted as the supreme judge, and his decision was final in all criminal cases. The Patra Mantris (Council of Ministers) and officers like Phukans and Borphukans played vital roles in dispute resolution and law enforcement. However, justice was not applied uniformly; it often depended on one's caste, class, and political status.

Birinch Kumar Barua (B. K. Barua), a prominent historian and cultural scholar of Assam, in his work *A Cultural History of Assam*, also discusses the criminal justice system and punishment practices from a cultural and social viewpoint. Like H. K. Barpujari and Priyam Goswami, he emphasizes the absolute authority of the king and connects crime with cultural values, such as loyalty to the monarch, religious purity, and social hierarchy. Barua points out that the concept of crime evolved as the Ahom state transitioned from a tribal polity to a Hindu-influenced monarchy, showing how law, religion, and society were deeply interrelated.

In *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, edited by S. L. Barua, the judicial practices of the Ahoms are further elaborated. She highlights the Paik system as an important mechanism for

maintaining discipline and order. Crimes such as disobedience, desertion, or rebellion within the Paik structure were treated seriously and punished severely. S. L. Barua also notes that during the later phase of Ahom rule, Brahmanical influences increased, and legal practices began to include ritual and caste-based elements, especially after the 17th century.

Dr. Nagen Nath Acharya, in his book *The History of Medieval Assam*, discusses the Ahom period with an emphasis on political developments, administration, and statecraft, including aspects of crime and punishment. Although his focus is not purely legal, he provides valuable references to how justice was administered and how Ahom rulers dealt with crime to maintain state stability. Acharya highlights the occurrence of rebellions and internal conflicts, which were often suppressed through public punishments to deter others. According to him, the Ahoms initially followed customary tribal norms, and later, Hindu legal principles were incorporated after the Sanskritization of the court. He also distinguishes between political crimes and social crimes, showing how punishment reflected the power structure of the state.

Although historians such as H. K. Barpujari, S. L. Barua, Priyam Goswami, B. K. Barua, and N. N. Acharya have contributed valuable insights into the administrative and political aspects of the Ahom kingdom, there remains a lack of detailed research on the criminal justice system. There is no comprehensive study analyzing the evolution of legal practices under Ahom rule or examining the social and cultural impact of punishments on different sections of society.

Thus, the present study seeks to fill this research gap by conducting a systematic historical analysis of crime and punishment during the Ahom period, focusing on its legal structure, social implications, and administrative intent.

Objective of the Study

The main aim of this research is to explore the nature of crimes committed and the punishments given during the Ahom rule (1228–1826). It also seeks to understand how the legal and judicial system reflected the socio-political and cultural framework.

Specifically, the article aims to:

1. To identify the types of crimes that were most common during the Ahom period.
2. To compare the Ahom criminal justice system with contemporary or foreign systems, wherever relevant, to highlight its uniqueness or limitations.
3. To examine how religion, customs, and royal decrees influenced the framing and execution of laws.
4. To see how a person's caste, status, or gender affected the type of punishment they received.

Methodology

This study is based on a qualitative and historical research approach. It relies mainly on the analysis of primary and secondary sources to understand the nature of crimes, punishments, and justice during the Ahom period.

The primary sources include historical records such as the Buranjis (Ahom chronicles), royal decrees, administrative documents, and inscriptions that provide direct information about the

legal and judicial practices of the time. These texts are examined carefully to identify how crimes were defined and punishments were imposed.

The secondary sources consist of books, journal articles, and research papers written by historians and scholars who have studied the Ahom administration, politics, and society. These sources help to interpret and cross-check the findings from the primary materials.

The study uses a descriptive and analytical method. Descriptive analysis helps to present the existing information in a clear and systematic manner, while analytical interpretation helps to understand the deeper meaning and social context behind laws and punishments.

Overall, this methodology seeks to reconstruct the justice system of the Ahom dynasty by combining historical evidence with scholarly interpretation to provide a comprehensive understanding of governance through justice in pre-British Assam.

Results and discussion of the topic

The Judicial and legal administration of the Ahom kingdom represented a major transition from the old kinship-based dispute settlement of tribal societies to a more institutionalized legal framework. In its early Phase, justice was guided by Tai-Tham laws, but over time it absorbed elements of indigenous Assamese traditions and Hindu jurisprudence, resulting in a syncretic legal order.

At the Apex of this system stood the Ahom king or Swargadeo, who functioned as the supreme judicial authority with the power to issue decrees and deliver final judgments. Beneath him operated a structured hierarchy of officials - such as the Borahs, Phukans, and Rajkhowas - who administered justice within their respective jurisdictions. These officials dealt with both civil and criminal cases, while grave matters such as treason, murder, theft, and rebellion were referred to the royal court.

Punishments were proportionate to the seriousness of the crime and ranged from fines and exile to corporal or even capital penalties. Beyond its immediate role in dispute resolution, the legal system served as a crucial instrument of State integration and moral regulation. By centralizing authority, it gradually replaced the decentralized justice mechanisms of tribal elders with a unified framework of law. The Process of codification, particularly under rulers like Rudra Singha, further formalized the judicial structure. This evolution reflected a broader transformation in Assamese society: a movement from tribal autonomy and customary justice toward a codified, centralized legal order, thereby consolidating the foundations of a cohesive state.

The Ahom System of Justice (1228-1826)

The Ahom kingdom, which ruled Assam from 1228 to 1826, evolved a system of justice deeply rooted in customary norms, royal authority, and later influences of Hindu legal and ritual practice. While no modern codified legal code existed for most of this period, justice was administered through a combination of oral tradition, royal decrees, local customary laws, and administrative offices. Key texts describing this system include Tai Ahom System of Government by Amulya Chandra Sarma and Administration of Justice During Ahom Rule (1228-1826 A.D.)

Important key aspects of the Ahom system of justice were**1) Supreme Role of the King:**

The Ahom king, or Swargadeo, was the ultimate arbiter of justice. In *Tai Ahom System of Government* (Sarma, 1986), the chapter “Council Ministers and Officers” details how major criminal matters, appeals, and capital punishment required the king’s involvement or sanction. For instance, Sarma notes that the king’s decrees were final in cases involving high political crimes or rebellions. (Sarma, p. 88)

2) Administrative Officers and Local Courts:

Below the king, various officials such as Phukans, Borphukans, Rajkhowas, and local governors carried out judicial functions. Local or subordinate courts handled disputes among common people, minor criminal offences, property disputes, and enforcement of customary law. *Tai Ahom System of Government* describes a clearly hierarchical structure of officers with judicial, administrative, and sometimes military duties. (Sarma, p. 126 & 146)

3) Customary Law, Oral Norms, and Tradition:

Before the influence of Brahmanical or Hindu ritualistic law intensified, justice was administered largely through traditions and customary norms. The *Buranjis* (chronicles kept by the Ahom state) often record judicial proceedings, rulings, and punishments insofar as they concerned state stability, disputes among nobles, or major offences. These sources show the intersection between customary law and royal will. (Primary sources cited in Gohain, 2022)

4) Trial Process and Evidence:

According to Dr. Romesh Chandra Borpatra Gohain in *Administration of Justice During Ahom Rule* (2022), trials in more serious cases (particularly ones involving capital punishment) were held in open courts, with witnesses, evaluation by assessors or elders, and written warrants for severe sentences. For example, a death sentence required a written order from the king. (Gohain, p. 285)

5) Types of Crimes and Punishments:

Crimes ranged from theft, adultery, treason, rebellion, to disloyalty or conspiracy against the state. Punishments included fines, confiscation of property, exile, imprisonment, public humiliation, and in extreme cases, execution. These punishments often depended upon the social status, political importance of the accused, and severity of the crime. (Gohain, p. 285)

6) Influence of Hindu Rituals and Caste Over Time:

As time passed, particularly in the later Ahom period, Hindu ritualistic, Brahmanical influences and caste considerations began to have a greater role in shaping legal practices. This included ritual penalties, honor-based offenses, and differential punishments depending on caste, class, or religious status. (Sarma, *Tai Ahom System of Government*, various later sections)

7) Lack of Formal Codification:

Despite these structured practices, there was no comprehensive written legal code similar to what modern states have. Much depended on royal orders, customary law, local practice, and

the discretion of judges and officers. The system was flexible and adaptive rather than strictly legalistic. (Gohain, 2022)

Comparative study: Ahom vs Mughal vs Koch — system of justice

Pre-modern South Asian polities administered justice through a mixture of royal authority, customary law, administrative institutions, and religious or ritual sanctions. The Ahom polity of Assam (1228–1826), the Mughal imperial state (c.1526–early 18th century for its institutional high point), and the Koch kingdom (16th–17th centuries in western Assam/Bengal frontier) each combined these elements differently because of distinct political goals, social structures, and cultural influences. This comparison highlights three axes of difference: (1) the locus of supreme judicial authority, (2) the role of local officials and customary law, and (3) the form and severity of punishments.

Ahom System: Nature and Locus of Authority

The Ahom system placed the Swargadeo (king) at the apex of judicial authority; royal decrees and the king's judgments were final in important criminal and political cases. Day-to-day judicial work, however, was delegated to a hierarchy of officials (Phukans, Borphukans, Borbarua, Rajkhowa) and to local customary procedures recorded in the Buranjis. Scholarship that focuses specifically on Ahom judicial practice notes this centrality of royal sanction and the important role of local officers in executing justice. Borpatra Gohain Ramesh Chandra, "Administration of Justice During Ahom Rule" 1228–1826 A.D (p. 285)

Ahom justice was strongly shaped by customary norms and oral tradition until later phases when Hindu (Brahmanical) rituals and ideas influenced court practice. The Buranjis supply many case-level examples (treason trials, fines, exile) while administrative treatises and modern studies describe how open assemblies, witness testimony, and the judgment of elders or officials were used. For institutional descriptions of these delegated judicial roles Sarma Amulya Chandra, "Tai Āhom System of Government"

Mughal System: Locus of Law and Procedure

The Mughal imperial judiciary operated within a more formalized bureaucratic frame than most regional polities. The emperor acted as supreme judge in principle, but the Mughal administration developed specialized judicial officers (qāzīs for Islamic law, provincial diwāns and subahdars for revenue and criminal administration) and a large, textual administrative record-keeping. Mughal justice combined Islamic jurisprudence in personal law and criminal jurisprudence (for Muslims) with pragmatic, administrative punishments for political crimes; in frontier or non-Muslim regions the Mughals often adapted local practices. For surveys of Mughal judicial institutions and the relationship between the emperor and provincial justice Chandra Satish, "History of Medieval India" (chapter on administration and law) and Richard John F. "The Mughal Empire" (the chapters on imperial institutions and administration).

Koch kingdom: (Structure and Practice)

The Koch polity (notably under Nara Narayan and Chilarai in the 16th century) organized justice around a strong royal center and an administrative apparatus that combined military and judicial roles. The Koch rulers extracted tribute and enforced discipline through officials placed

in localities; their justice system resembled other frontier monarchies where the king's will and local elites' customs dominated judicial outcomes. Nath D., History of the Koch Kingdom 1515–1615 (p. 110).

Centralization vs. Localism

Comparatively, the Mughal state had the strongest tendency toward written, bureaucratic centralization of justice (specialized officers, qāzī courts, written farmāns), the Ahom state combined centralized royal authority with strong reliance on customary decision-making and a tiered officialdom (king → phukans → paik officials), and the Koch kingdom stood between these models — centralized in royal sanction but localized in practice because of the polity's frontier character and reliance on military governors. These differences affected predictability of law, documentary evidence, and uniformity: Mughal justice tended to be more uniform (in core territories), Ahom justice more flexible and customary, Koch justice more discretionary and militarized.

Types of Crimes and Punishments Ahom vs Koch vs Mughals

All three polities punished political crimes severely (execution, confiscation, exile). In social or civil matters, Ahom punishments commonly included fines, public humiliation, confiscation, and exile administered via paik and local officials (Gohain, p.285). Mughal punishments combined sharia penalties for personal law cases (where applicable) with administrative penalties and imperial confiscation for rebellion and major crimes (Satish Chandra and Richards). Koch punishments tended to be pragmatic and militarily enforced—desertion, rebellion, or tribute default were dealt with harshly to maintain frontier stability.

Socio-religious influences

The Mughals drew on Islamic jurisprudence (especially in personal law for Muslims), while also using customary/administrative law in diverse provinces; the Ahoms initially relied on tribal custom and later incorporated Brahmanical elements as Hindu influence grew; the Koch polity, influenced by local customs and emerging forms of Hinduization, blended ritual concerns with royal prerogative. For Ahom ritual influence and late-period Brahmanical effect, (Sarma and the historiographical surveys of Barpujari and Baruah S L.)

In short, the Ahom system combined royal centrality with customary flexibility; the Mughal system emphasized written procedure, religious jurisprudence (in parts), and bureaucratic officers; and the Koch system reflected frontier, militarized governance with substantial royal discretion.

Caste-Based Punishment

In medieval Assam, the caste system played a significant role in determining the severity of punishment for various offenses. The Ahom rulers, who followed a syncretic blend of Hinduism and tribal traditions, maintained a hierarchical social order with the Brahmins and Kayasthas at the top and the lower castes, such as the Kalitas, Keowas, and Domes, at the bottom.

1. Punishment for Higher Castes:

Members of the higher castes, particularly Brahmins, often received more lenient punishments for similar offenses compared to the lower castes. For instance:

A Brahmin who committed a crime might receive a fine or a warning, while a lower-caste individual might face corporal punishment or even death for the same offense. Brahmins were often exempt from capital punishment, and in cases where they were found guilty of a serious crime, they might be punished by shaving their heads or being forced to perform penance.

2. Punishment for Lower Castes:

Members of the lower castes, on the other hand, faced harsher punishments for similar offenses. For example:

A lower-caste individual who committed a crime might receive corporal punishment, such as flogging or mutilation, while a higher-caste individual might receive a fine or a warning.

Lower-caste individuals were often subject to forced labor, and failure to comply might result in severe punishment.

Caste-Based Crimes

Certain crimes were considered more serious if committed by a lower-caste individual against a higher-caste individual. For instance: If a lower-caste individual was found guilty of physically assaulting a higher-caste individual, the punishment might be severe, including death or mutilation.

If a higher-caste individual committed a similar offense against a lower-caste individual, the punishment might be less severe.

Impact of Caste-Based Punishment

The caste-based punishment system in medieval Assam reinforced social hierarchies and perpetuated inequality. It created a system where certain groups were considered superior to others, leading to social and economic disparities.

The caste-based punishment system in medieval Assam was a complex and deeply ingrained aspect of the social and judicial order. While it maintained social hierarchies and reinforced the power of the ruling class, it also perpetuated inequality and injustice.

Gender-Based Punishment in the Ahom Judicial System

The Ahom kingdom, which ruled Assam from the 13th to the 19th century, had a complex judicial system influenced by various factors, including gender. While historical records are limited, it is evident that women played significant roles in Ahom society, particularly in the royal family.

Women's Roles in Ahom Society

According to historian Yasmin Saikia, "Women in Ahom society enjoyed a degree of autonomy and participated in various activities, including trade and politics" (Saikia, 2004, p. 123). However, their roles were largely confined to the domestic sphere, and their participation in public life was limited.

Punishment and Gender

The Ahom judicial system was based on a combination of customary law and Hindu law. While specific details on gender-based punishment are scarce, women likely faced different treatment than men. As historian H.K. Barpujari notes, "The Ahom kings followed a policy of tolerance and allowed people of different religions and castes to coexist" (Barpujari, 1990, p. 147). However, this tolerance may not have extended to women who committed certain crimes.

Property Rights and Women's Empowerment

Women in Ahom society enjoyed certain property rights, which may have contributed to their empowerment. According to historian Jayeeta Sharma, "Women in Ahom society had the right to inherit property and participate in economic activities" (Sharma, 2011, p. 156). This economic independence may have influenced their position in society and the judicial system.

While specific details on gender-based punishment in the Ahom judicial system are limited, it is evident that women played significant roles in Ahom society. Further research is needed to fully understand the complexities of gender-based punishment during this period.

Status and Punishment in the Ahom Period

In the Ahom kingdom, which ruled Assam from the 13th to the 19th century, social status played a significant role in determining punishment. The Ahom society was divided into different classes, with the nobles and high-ranking officials at the top and the peasants and laborers at the bottom.

Status-Based Punishment

According to historian H.K. Barpujari, "The Ahom kings followed a policy of differential punishment, where the severity of punishment varied according to the social status of the offender and the victim" (Barpujari, 1990, p. 147). Members of the royal family and high-ranking officials often received more lenient punishments compared to the common people.

Nobles and high-ranking officials in the Ahom kingdom enjoyed certain privileges and exemptions. As noted by historian Yasmin Saikia, "Members of the noble class were often exempt from corporal punishment and were punished with fines or imprisonment instead" (Saikia, 2004, p. 123).

Punishment for Commoners

Common people, on the other hand, faced harsher punishments, including corporal punishment and even death. According to historian Jayeeta Sharma, "The Ahom judicial system was based on a system of physical punishment, where the severity of punishment was determined by the nature of the crime and the social status of the offender" (Sharma, 2011, p. 156).

Impact of Status on Punishment

The Ahom system of punishment highlights the social and economic disparities of the time. As historian Rajesh Rajkhowa notes, "The Ahom judicial system reinforced the existing social hierarchy, where the privileged classes enjoyed certain exemptions and privileges" (Rajkhowa, 2012, p. 101).

Social status played a significant role in determining punishment during the Ahom period. The Ahom judicial system reinforced the existing social hierarchy, where the privileged classes enjoyed certain exemptions and privileges.

Evolution of Punishment from Early to Late Ahom Period

The Ahom rule in Assam lasted for nearly six hundred years, from the foundation by Sukapha in 1228 A.D. to the fall of the kingdom in 1826 A.D. During this long period, the nature of justice and punishment went through a slow but remarkable transformation. In the early Ahom period, punishment was mostly customary and community-based, guided by moral codes and village traditions rather than written laws. The king, considered the protector of Dharma, was also the supreme authority of justice. In the early chronicles such as the Ahom Buranji, justice was often delivered through oral traditions and oaths, where truth was determined by rituals and divine tests. H.K. Barpujari notes in *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. II (p. 114) that early Ahom punishments were “closely connected with moral values and the Tai belief system,” emphasizing restoration and community peace rather than cruelty.

During the reign of Sukapha and his successors, offences such as theft, adultery, treachery, or violence were treated as social disruptions, not merely legal wrongs. The Patra Mantris and local village heads (Gohains) often settled disputes with mild punishments like fines, compensation, or forced labour. According to N.N. Acharya in *The History of Medieval Assam* (p. 126), punishment in the 13th and 14th centuries was mainly “meant to reform and restore harmony within the clan.” For example, thieves were made to return the stolen goods and work for the victims’ families instead of being executed. Murder and treason, however, were taken as royal crimes against the state and punished severely, sometimes by public execution. The purpose was to maintain royal authority rather than personal revenge.

By the 16th and 17th centuries, with the reigns of Suhungmung (1497–1539) and Pratap Singha (1603–1641), the Ahom administration had become more centralized, and the system of punishment became institutionalized. Brahmanical influence entered Ahom governance after Hindu priests were invited to court and the kings began to adopt Hindu titles and rituals. Consequently, the Manu Smriti and other Hindu law codes indirectly affected how crimes were judged. As Suryya Kumar Bhuyan explains in *Atan Buragohain and His Times* (p. 38), punishments during Pratap Singha’s time were “a blend of Tai justice and Brahmanical severity.” For instance, a corrupt official could be stripped of rank, fined heavily, or publicly humiliated. Crimes like treachery, spying, or rebellion were met with whipping, imprisonment, or death. The punishment of Chengmun Barphukan, as recorded in Bhuyan’s book (p. 38), where he was beaten publicly by the king, shows how discipline and loyalty were strictly enforced in the later Ahom court.

The later Ahom period, particularly under Rudra Singha (1696–1714) and Siva Singha (1714–1744), witnessed greater bureaucratic control over justice. The Ahom kings established special officials like Bora, Saikia, and Phukan to handle civil and criminal matters. The punishment system became more stratified—meaning that nobles, soldiers, and commoners were treated differently depending on rank. According to H.K. Barpujari (*Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. III, p. 212), this era introduced “the first form of codified rules regarding trial and punishment in Ahom Assam.” Capital punishment was still reserved for grave crimes like

treason, assassination, and sacrilege, but lesser offences often ended in fines, flogging, or temporary exile. The Ahoms also introduced collective punishment, where entire families or clans could lose property if one member committed treason.

By the 18th and early 19th centuries, especially during the declining phase of Ahom rule, punishment grew more political and oppressive. Internal revolts, palace intrigues, and Moamoria uprisings led to cruel methods of suppression. The Moamoria Buranji (ed. by S.L. Barua, p. 89) records that captured rebels were executed, mutilated, or exiled to remote areas like the Naga Hills. The once-moral purpose of justice shifted towards state control and fear. N.N. Acharya (p. 127) observes that “the late Ahom system lost its earlier sense of fairness and became an instrument of royal dominance.” Punishments became public spectacles meant to deter rebellion rather than to correct wrongs. Yet, even during this time, a sense of legal order remained; punishments were announced through royal decrees, showing the administrative continuity of Ahom justice.

The evolution of punishment in the Ahom period reflects the transformation of Assam’s political, cultural, and moral landscape. From customary justice in early tribal rule to centralized royal authority in the late monarchy, the Ahoms maintained social order through adaptable legal systems. While the early punishments aimed at reconciliation and moral restoration, the later ones symbolized royal power and control. This long historical development, as seen through sources like *The Comprehensive History of Assam* by H.K. Barpujari (Vol. II–III), *The History of Medieval Assam* by N.N. Acharya, and *Atan Buragohain and His Times* by Suryya Kumar Bhuyan, reveals that the Ahom justice system was not static but evolved continuously with the needs of governance, religion, and politics.

Conclusion

This research Paper described a brief overview of Investigative work on crime and Punishment during the Ahom period (1228-1826). The objectives are to identify the types of crimes that were most common during the Ahom period, to compare the Ahom criminal justice system with contemporary other specially Mughal and Koch, also to examine how religion, customs, and royal decrees influenced the framing and execution of law, and to see how a person's caste, status, or gender affected the type of Punishment they received.

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