

in 333,000,000 that you will be right. . . . That next man we meet is a Mussulman. You know what the Koran teaches, so can tell pretty accurately what he believes, or rather ought to believe. For even the Mussulmans of Assam have not escaped the influence of their environment. . . . Passing on we find a man whose sturdy limbs give proof of mountain climbing. His prominent check-bones and slightly Mongolian cast of features at once mark him as different from the Assamese. I tell you, he is a Hill man. But can you tell me what demon he worships?"<sup>6</sup>

All these Hill people are demon worshippers, but each tribe has its own demons. They are not so much concerned about the future, but are mostly concerned with the present moment. Their motto might be said to be "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." The Kachari is tainted with the doctrine of the Sadducees. He believes in neither resurrection nor spiritual life. The Mikir, however, who is also a Hill man, looks forward to a great beautiful city into which he hopes to gain admittance. Dr. Moore goes on:

"Here now we meet a native Christian, the chances are that he is from a hill tribe people, or if formerly a Hindu, that he is from the lower rather than the higher classes. Here at least, you think, is a man who believes and thinks as you do. But do not be too sure of this. . . . The ideas and associations of his childhood may not yet have been fully outgrown, though he is a true believer in the Christ of God."

The enumeration of various religions does in no sense adequately explain them, but it gives us some idea of the ground in which Christianity in Assam had its inception and where it was to be developed in subsequent years.

## CHAPTER II PRE-BRITISH RULE

The ancient history of Assam, for the greater part, is shrouded in darkness. Prior to the advent of the Mohammedans in the fourteenth century, the inhabitants of the province had no idea of history;\* therefore, our knowledge of the people is limited to what can laboriously be pieced together from old inscriptions,\*\* the accounts of foreign invaders and travelers,† and from incidental references in religious writings.†† The Ahoms, however, who were the ruling people of Assam from the seventeenth century until near the end of the eighteenth century, appear to have possessed the historical faculty. They were good historians, and they left several valuable manuscripts, which may be published some day. One of the outstanding early manuscripts, was burned during the reign of Rajeswar Singh in 1751-1768. During his reign an act of literary iconoclasm occurred when many of the old family chronicles were destroyed, because of some remarks, adverse to the prince, made in a history by Numali Bar Phukon.<sup>1</sup>

\* It is said, however, that fragments as early as from the 12th Century are in existence.

\*\* Several copper plates have recently been discovered at Benares, date 1105, on which was inscribed a deed or gift of some land in the neighborhood of Gauhati.

† Hiouen Thoang, the celebrated Chinese traveler who passed through India during the years 629 to 645 A. D., has left a few scattered remarks.

†† In 1894, Sir Charles Lyal, K. C. S. I., instituted a historical research, in the process of which several items of interest were discovered, such as an inscription on a rock at Tezpur.