by the protrusion of the subsoil, which consists of a stiff clay abounding in iron nodules, and is furrowed by frequent ravines and water-courses, which divide the cultivable fields into innumerable small sunken patches or *holas.* The chief river is the Brahmaputra, which is navigable throughout the year by steamers. The tributaries of the Brahmaputra comprise the Dhaneswari, the Dihing, the Disang and the Dikhu, all flowing in a northerly direction from the Naga Hills. Included within the district is the island of Maguli, formed by the silt brought down by the Subansiri river from the Himalayas and deposited in the wide channel of the Brahmaputra. Coal, iron, petroleum and salt are found. The climate, like that of the rest of the Assam valley, is comparatively mild and temperate, and the annual rainfall averages about 94 in.

In 1901 the population was 597,969, showing an increase of 24 % in the decade. Sibsagar is the chief centre of tea cultivation in the Brahmaputra valley, which was introduced by the Assam Company in 1852. It contains a large number of well-managed tea-gardens, which bring both men and money into the province. There are also several timber mills. The Assam-Bengal railway serves the southern part of the district, and a light railway connects this line with Kalikamukh on the Brahmaputra, itself an important highway of communication.

On the decline of the Ahom dynasty Sibsagar, with the rest of the Assam valley, fell into the hands of the Burmese. As a result of the first Burmese war (1824-1826) the valley was annexed to British India, and the country now forming Sibsagar district, together with the southern portion of Lakhimpur, was placed under the rule of Raja Purandhar Singh, on his agreeing to pay a tribute of £5000. Owing to the raja’s misrule, Sibsagar was reduced to a state of great poverty, and, as he was unable to pay the tribute, the territories were resumed by the government of India, and in 1838 were placed under the direct management of a British officer.

See *Sibsagar District Gazetteer* (Allahabad, 1906).

**SIBTHORP, JOHN** (1758-1796), English botanist, was born at Oxford on the 28th of October 1758, and was the youngest son of Dr Humphrey Sibthorp (1713-1797), who from 1747 to 1784 was Sherardian professor of botany at Oxford. He graduated at Oxford in 1777, and then studied medicine at Edinburgh and Montpellier. In 1784 he succeeded his father in the Sherardian chair. Leaving his professional duties to a deputy he left England for Göttingen and Vienna, in preparation for a botanical tour in Greece (1786). Returning to England at the end of the following year he took part in the foundation of the Linnaean Society in 1788, and set to work on a flora of Oxfordshire, which was published in 1794 as *Flora Oxoniensis.* He made a second journey to Greece, but developed consumption on the way home and died at Bath on the 8th of February 1796. By his will he bequeathed his books on natural history and agriculture to Oxford university, where also he founded the Sibthorpian professorship of rural economy, attaching it to the chair of botany. He directed that the endowment should first be applied to the publication of his *Flora Graeca* and *Florae Graecae Prodromus,* for which, however, he had done little beyond collecting some three thousand species and providing the plates. The task of preparing the works was undertaken by Sir J. E. Smith, who issued the two volumes of the *Prodromus* in 1806 and 1813, and six volumes of the *Flora Graeca* between 1806 and 1828. The seventh appeared in 1830, after Smith’s death, and the remaining three were produced by John Lindley between 1833 and 1840.

Another member of the family, Ralph Waldo Sibthorp (1792-1879), a grandson of Dr Humphrey Sibthorp, was a well-known English divine. He was educated at Oxford and took Anglican orders in 1815. He became known as a prominent "evangelical ” in London, but in 1841 was received into the Roman Church. Two years later he returned to the Anglican Church, though he was not readmitted to the ministry till 1857. Finally he re-entered the Roman communion in 1865, but on his death in 1879 he was, by his own request, buried according to the service of the English Church. His elder brother, Colonel Charles de Laet Waldo Sibthorp (1783-1855), represented Lincoln in parliament from 1826 until his death, except for a short period in 1833-1834, and was notorious for the vigour with which he expressed his opinions and for his opposition to the Catholic Emancipation Bill and the Reform Bill. The eldest son of Colonel Sibthorp, Gervaise Tottenham Waldo Sib­thorp (1815-1861), was also M.P. for Lincoln.

**SIBYLLINE ORACLES,** a collection of Apocalyptic writings, composed in imitation of the heathen Sibylline books (see Sibyls) by the Jews and, later, by the Christians in their efforts to win the heathen world to their faith. The fact that they copied the form in which the heathen revelations were conveyed (Greek hexameter verses) and the Homeric language is evidence of a degree of external Hellenization, which is an important fact in the history of post-exilic Judaism. Such was the activity of these Jewish and Christian missionaries that their imitations have swamped the originals. Even Virgil in his fourth Eclogue seems to have used Jewish rather than purely heathen oracles.

The extant fragments and conglomerations of the Sibylline oracles, heathen, Jewish and Christian, were collected, examined, translated and explained by C. Alexandre in a monumental edition full of exemplary learning and acumen. On the basis of his results, as they have been scrutinized by scholars like Schürer and Geffcken, it is possible to disentangle some of the different strata with a certain degree of confidence.

1. Book III. contains Jewish oracles relative to the Golden Age established by Roman supremacy in the East about the middle of the 2nd century b.c. (especially 175-181: cf. 1 Macc. viii. 1-16). The evacuation of Egypt by Antiochus Epiphanes at the bidding of the Roman ambassadors suits the warning addressed to “ Greece ” (732-740) against overweening ambition and any attempt upon the Holy City, which is somewhat strangely enforced by the famous Greek oracle, “ Let Camarina be, tis best unstirred.” Older than these are the Babylonian oracle (97-154) and the Persian (381-387). A later Jewish oracle (46-62) refers to the wars of the second Triumvirate of Rome, and the whole compilation seems to come from a Christian redactor.

2. Book IV. is a definite attack upon the heathen Sibyl— the Jews and Christians did not attempt to pass off their “ forgeries ” as genuine—as the mouthpiece of Apollo by a Jew who speaks for the Great God and yet uses a Greek review (49- 114) of ancient history from the Assyrian empire. There are references to the legendary escape of Nero to Parthia (119-124) and the destruction of Jerusalem in a.d. 70 (130-136).

3. Book V. contains a more developed form of the myth of *Nero redivivus* in which a panegyric on him (137-141) has been brought up to date by some Jew or Christian, and eulogies of Hadrian and his successors (48-51) side by side with the legend of the miserable death of Titus in quittance of his destruction of Jerusalem (411-413) which probably represents the hope of the zealots who survived it.

4. The remaining books appear to be Christian (some heretical) and to belong to the 2nd and 3rd centuries.

Editions.—C. Alexandre (Paris, 1841, 2 vols.; 1869, 1 vol.); Rzach (Prague, 1891; text and appendix of sources); Geffcken (Leipzig, 1902; text with full apparatus of variants, sources and parallel passages) ; see also his *Komposition und Entstehungszeit des Oracula Sibyllina* (Leipzig, 1902). An annotated Eng. trans. was undertaken in 1910 by H. C. O. Lanchester. For references to modern literature see Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, iii. (4th ed.), 555-592. (J. H. A. H.)

**SIBYLS@@1** *(Sibyllae),* the name given by the Greeks and Romans to certain women who prophesied under the inspiration of a deity. The inspiration manifested itself outwardly in distorted features, foaming mouth and frantic gestures. Homer does not refer to a Sibyl, nor does Herodotus. The first Greek writer, so far as we know, who does so is Heraclitus (c. 500 b.c.). As to the number and native countries of the Sibyls much diversity of opinion prevailed. Plato only speaks of one, but in course of time the number increased to ten according to Lactantius

@@@l The word is usually derived from ∑ιο-βολλα, the Doric form of θeoύ βoυλή (=will of God).