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ASSAM "THE LAND OF MISERY": LABOUR MIGRATION AND TECHNOLOGY OF TEA CULTURE, 1840-1906

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Introduction

Assam, prior to its occupation by the East India Company in 1826 was a sovereign state at that time which was ruled by the Ahom Kings.

¹ Until 1833, the East India Company's Government was undecided about its policy towards Assam. With the charter of 1833 which abolished the company's monopoly over commercial interests, there opened up the prospects of colonization of Assam with import of private enterprise and capital from Britain. From this year onwards, Englishmen were encouraged by the British administration to invest their capital in the wasteland of Assam to raise cash crops such as indigo, sugarcane and tea. Francis Jenkins (in charge of North-East Frontier 1834-66) pursued a policy of attracting British capitalists to Assam for developing freehold farms growing commercial crops but of no avail.

¹ Umananda Phukan, *The Ex-Tea Garden Labour Population in Assam* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1984), p.2.