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# Ahom Acquisition of War Booty: A Study on Mughal Talwars in the Museums of Assam

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**Abstract:** *The Ahoms ruled over the Brahmaputra Valley between the 13th century CE and the 19th century CE. During this period, they used various types of swords. Some of these were forged by them, while others were collected as war booty during armed conflict. Talwar was one such sword that the Ahoms collected as war booty during the Ahom-Mughal conflict. However, apart from the name and its acquisition as war booty, there is no other information about it. Hence, to mitigate the knowledge gap, ten Talwar, preserved and displayed in the Assam State Museum in Guwahati, the District Museum in Tezpur, the District Museum in Mangaldoi, and the Ahom-Tai Museum in Sivasagar are documented, and their details furnished. Along with the descriptive study and analysis of Talwar, the paper also provides an overview of the Ahom-Mughal conflict to understand how and in what instances the Ahoms collected Mughal Talwar. Besides that, the issue of whether collected Talwar can be classified as Ahom weapons is also dealt with in the paper. This has helped to bridge the knowledge gap and enhance understanding of Ahom-edged weapons.*

**Keywords:** *Ahom, Ahom-Mughal conflict, Brahmaputra valley Documentation, Museum, Talwar*

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## Introduction

The Ahom ruled over the *Nam-Ti-Lao* (Brahmaputra) Valley between the 13th century CE and 19th century CE. During this period, they used different types of swords—while some were forged by them,

others were collected as war booty during armed conflicts. *Talwar* was one such sword collected by the Ahoms as war booty during the Ahom-Mughal conflict in the 17th century CE.

The Ahom-Mughal conflict began in 1615 CE when the Mughal governor of Bengal, Qasim Khan, launched an expedition against the Ahoms under Syed Hakkim and Syed Aba Bakr. The conflict resumed between 1636 CE and 1639 CE. According to the *Buranji* (Ahom chronicle) during this conflict, the Ahoms collected *Talwar* as war booty from the Mughals. Later, during *Chao-Pha* (Ahom monarch) Sutamla's reign (1648 CE-1663 CE), the Ahoms again collected *Talwar* as war booty from the Mughals. The Ahoms also collected war booty, including *Talwar* during Supatpha's reign (1681 CE-1696 CE), after Masur Khan, the Mughal *Faujdar* fled beyond the Manas River.

The earliest reference to the Ahom acquisition of Mughal *Talwar* is made in the Ahom chronicles. Yet these did not classify the *Talwar* as an Ahom-edged weapon as it was of Mughal origin. Limitations of the previous works were addressed in more recent studies by Baishya (2009: 304) and Gogoi (2017: 48) who identified and classified a wide variety of Ahom swords. Yet these works too neglected the *Talwar*. This issue of opting for war booty, and not just *Talwar*, as an Ahom-edged weapon is addressed in Gogoi's (2017) work which argues that war booty constituted a part of Ahom-edged weapons as the Ahoms later used it in battles. However, these studies limit themselves by highlighting only the name without providing any detailed description of *Talwar*. Hence, there is a lack of information and a knowledge gap.

Thus, to mitigate the gap, the author made an extensive field study, including visits to museums and libraries. Hence, ten *Talwar* are identified which are preserved and displayed in the Assam State Museum in Guwahati, the District Museum in Tezpur, the District Museum in Mangaldoi, and the Ahom-Tai Museum in Sivasagar. The primary data, once collected, is then corroborated with the *Buranji* (Ahom chronicle), which helped to mitigate the knowledge gap and highlight an unknown aspect of one of the Ahom swords, i.e., the *Talwar*.

## The Ahoms

The Ahoms are part of the Tai ethnic group. This ethnic group with many factions lives in an area that includes parts of the Northeastern Region of India, Southern China, and parts of South-East Asia. The Tai ethnic group is known by their local names as per the region they inhabit. For instance, the Tai living in Myanmar is called Shan whereas in Thailand, they are called Thai, in Laos, they are called Lao, and in China, they are called Zhuang. Likewise, the Tai-Mao branch, called Shan in Myanmar, who migrated to the Brahmaputra Valley in the 13th century CE are called "Ahom."

The Ahoms numbering nine thousand left their native land Mongmao in 1215 CE under the leadership of Sukapha (Phukan et. al. 1998: 21). After passing through Mong-Kwang and crossing the *Doi-Kao-Rong* (Patkai Hills), the Ahoms arrived near the *Nam-Jin* (Buri Dihing) River. Soon the Ahoms subjugated the *Phu-Kao* (Moran) and *Khan-Rang-You* (Barahi) ethnic groups, and laid the foundation of *Mong-Dun-Sun-Kham* ('mong' = country/province + 'dun' = full + 'sun' = garden + 'kham' = gold) or Ahom kingdom in 1228 CE. Sukapha became the first monarch and he made *Che-Tam-Doi* (Charaideo) the capital of the kingdom.

## Ahom-Mughal Conflict

Over the successive years after the founding of the Ahom kingdom, Sukapha's successors expanded the kingdom over the Brahmaputra Valley. In the process they came into conflict with the Chutiya, Dimasa, Koch, and at last the Mughals. The *Buranjis* highlight the Ahom-Mughal conflict in the 17th century CE, and also the Ahom acquisition of Mughal *Talwar*, among other armaments, as war booty.

### ***Susengpha alias Pratap Singh (1603 CE-1641 CE)***

The Ahom-Mughal conflict began in 1615 CE during the reign of Ahom monarch Susengpha. According to the *Purani Assam Buranji* (Goswami 1922: 63), *Kamrupar Buranji* (Bhuyan 1930: 20), and *Satsari Assam Buranji* (Bhuyan 1960: 27) the conflict broke out due to illegal encroachment by Mughal merchants on the Ahom territory to procure forest products, such as aloe wood, tobacco, cereals, etc. The above-mentioned *Buranjis* further note that Habung Chetia arrested one Mughal trader named Ratan Shah, but he escaped detention. However, two other Mughal traders who were also arrested were put to death, while two vessels filled with tobacco and cereal were seized.

The incident provided the Mughal governor of Bengal, Qasim Khan, to launch an expedition against the Ahoms under Syed Hakkim and Syed Aba Bakr in 1615 CE (Baruah 1985: 242). Barpujari (1992: 150) estimates the strength of the Mughal army to be “10000-12000 cavalries and infantry, 200 musketeers and a flotilla of 300-400 war boats.” In the ensuing conflict that followed, the Ahoms by 1616 CE were able to gain an upper hand. The subsequent defeat and death of the Mughal commander Abu Bakr is noted in the *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* (Borah 1936: 396) was due to his own “negligence and arrogance” while the *Kamrupar Buranji* (Bhuyan 1930) elicits the name of the Mughal officials who surrendered to the Ahoms. They were Raja Jagdeo, Gandharva Rai, Raja Rai, Kala Raja, Hara Pratap Singh, Indramani, Narasingha Rai, Bhagwan Rai and Karamchand.

The *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi* (Borah 1936: 399) also mentions the casualties on the Mughal side which stood at 1700 men killed on the spot. In addition, another 3400 men who escaped later died of their wounds, 9000 men were taken captive, and 3000 half-dead men concealed themselves in the jungle. Regarding the war booty, Gait (1905: 111) writes, “An immense amount of booty fell into the hands of the Ahoms.” Both the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930: 100) and *Kamrupar Buranji* (Bhuyan 1930: 23) provide details of the collected war booty. This includes spears, big shields, matchlocks, *Talwar*, daggers, boats, elephants, horses, etc.

Similarly, in a series of confrontations against another Mughal commander Mirza Nathan, the hill Rajas of Kamarupa sought the Ahom monarch Susengpha’s help who sent an Ahom contingent of 80000 men under the command of Hati Baruah (Kalita 1988: 72). After a prolonged struggle, Mirza Nathan retreated to Hajo while the Ahoms collected war booty. The *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930: 105-106) and the *Deodhai Assam Buranji* (Bhuyan 1932: 50) state that the war booty included—*Pitaliya hilloi* (brass matchlock), 8 *Bor hilloi* (large cannons), 27 *Hathnal* (hand-guns), 20-23 *Haru hilloi* (flint guns), 7 *Talwar*, etc.

The Ahom-Mughal conflict resumed again in 1636 CE and continued till 1639 CE. Between this period, the *Buranjis* mention that the Ahom acquired *Talwar* from the Mughals in large quantities. For example, during one encounter near the Sualkuchi fort, the *Ahom Buranji* (Barua 1930: 119) states that the Ahoms collected a war booty including 300 cannons and matchlocks, 160 *Talwar*, 76 big shields, 60 flint guns, 140 handguns, large quantities of gold and silver, etc. Similarly, in another instance, after demolishing the brick town of Hajo, the Ahom army captured a war booty that included 4920 *Talwar*, and other articles (Barua 1930: 120-121).

Peace between the Ahom and the Mughal was concluded by a treaty in 1639 CE, which demarcated Barnadi on *Uttarkul* (north bank of Brahmaputra) and Asurar Ali on *Dakshinkul* (south bank of the Brahmaputra) as the boundary between the two parties (Wade 1800: 284; Gait 1905: 121; Barpujari 1992: 164).

### ***Sutamla alias Jayadhvaj Singh (1648 CE-1663 CE)***

In 1658 CE, the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan fell ill, leading to a war of succession among the emperor’s sons. Taking advantage of the situation, the *Riyaz-us-Salatin* (Salim 1902: 223), *Maasir-*

*i-Alamgiri* (Sarkar 1947: 24), and *Assam Buranji* (Dutta 1938) mention that the Ahom king Sutamla occupied Kamarupa from the Mughal *Faujdar* Lutfullah Shirazi. In fact, according to the *Fatiya-i-Ibriya* (Blochmann 1872: 63), the Mughal *Faujdar* fled Kamarupa without any resistance and thus withdrew to Jahangirnagar (Dacca). The Ahoms captured a war booty which the *Assam Buranji* (Dutta 1938: 15) states, included *Talwar*, bows, matchlocks, cannonballs, etc. The Mughal civil war ended in 1660 CE with the accession of Aurangzeb to the throne. Later, Aurangzeb appointed Mir Jumla as the governor of Bengal with orders to “punish the lawless zamindars of the province, especially those of Assam and Mag (Arracan)” (Sarkar 1916: 156).

Thus, Mir Jumla made preparations for his invasion of Koch Bihar and Ahom kingdom in 1661 CE. According to Sarkar (1916) and Sarkar (1951), Mir Jumla’s army consisted of 12000 horses, 30000 foot-soldiers, and 323 war boats, including *ghurabs* (floating batteries) in charge of Dutch sailors, each towed by 4 *kusas* (long row-boats), carrying 14 guns and a crew of 50 to 60 men. Apart from the Dutch, Portuguese, and English sailors, there were also other Europeans in charge of various other divisions of Mir Jumla’s contingent, such as Armenian horsemen and Muscovites. In the confrontation, the Ahoms were defeated on multiple fronts, and in 1662 CE, Mir Jumla occupied *Chehung* (Garhgaon), the Ahom capital (Bhuyan 1957: 26).

However, Mir Jumla faced much hardship to retain his hold over Garhgaon and adjoining areas of Lakhau and Mathurapura due to surprise night attack and blockade of supply lines of the Mughals (Bhuyan 1945: 80; Bhuyan 1957: 26-28). Moreover, the advent of monsoon epidemics, such as fever and dysentery, resulted in many Mughal soldiers’ deaths (Bhuyan 1957: 28). Thus, the *Buranjis* mention that after negotiations, a treaty was signed between Mir Jumla and Ahoms in 1663 CE at Ghiladharighat (Bhuyan 1957: 30). Throughout Mir Jumla’s invasion, the Ahoms were not successful in collecting any war booty. On the contrary, both Gait (1905) and Sarkar (1951) note that the Mughals carried extensive war booty from the Ahoms. The total amount of war booty collected by the Mughals during the expedition is narrated by Sarkar (1951). He writes, “The number of guns captured from the start of the expedition till the General’s (Mir Jumla) return included 675 guns, of which one was a large iron gun, discharging 3 *maund* (1 *maund* = 37.32 kg.; 3 *maund* = 111.97 kg.); 1343 camel-swivels; 1200 *ramchangis* (some sort of light field piece); 6570 matchlocks; 340 *maunds* (12690.22 kg.) of gunpowder; 1960 chests of powder, each weighing about 2 *maund* (74 kg.); 7828 iron shields.”

### ***Supungmung alias Chakradhvaj Singh (1663 CE-1669 CE)***

With the signing of the treaty of Ghiladharighat (1663 CE), Kamarupa was transferred to the Mughals. Meanwhile, the Ahom monarch Sutamla died and was succeeded by Supungmung, who resolved to oust the Mughals from Kamarupa (Bhattacharya 1929: 359-360). His resolution exclaimed thus, “Death is preferable to a life of subordination to foreigners (Mughals). I have surrendered my independence for a suit of sewn garments!” (Bhuyan 1947: 12; Bhuyan 1957: 49).

Therefore, Supungmung made preparations, by establishing and supervising smithies at his capital for forging weapons, manufactured gunpowder, and constructed war sloops. He also organized a naval fleet and appointed Lachit Barphukan as the new general. Besides, he established cordial relations with the Dimasa and Jaintia monarchs (Gohain 1942: 31). Later, the Ahoms advanced towards Kamarupa, attacking the Mughal garrison at Bahbari in September 1667 CE. At Bahbari, the *Kamrupar Buranji* (Bhuyan 1930: 91-92) mentions that the Ahom collected matchlock and other articles as war booty. Then the Ahoms proceeded towards Itakhuli, and after scaling, the fort’s walls occupied it in 1667 CE. At Itakhuli, as well, the *Assam Buranji* (Dutta 1938: 28-29) mentions that the Ahoms collected a war booty.



When the defeat and loss of Kamarupa to the Ahoms reached Aurangzeb, he appointed Raja Ram Singh to command an expedition in Kamarupa against the Ahoms (Bhattacharya 1929: 367). In the confrontation that followed, the Ahoms, after receiving an initial setback at Alaboi, triumphed over the Mughals at Saraighat in 1671 CE (Kalita 1988: 100-107).

### ***Supatpha alias Gadadhar Singh (1681 CE-1696 CE)***

Supatpha ascended the throne in 1681 CE. According to the *Tungkhungia Buranji* (Bhuyan 1933: 17), “The king, after consulting the three *Dangarias*, i.e., *Phrang-Mong-Lung* (Bura Gohain), *Thao-Mong-Lung* (Bar Gohain), *Seng-Lung* (Barpatra Gohain), the *Phu-kan* (Phukan) and other officials, commanded them to attack the *Bangals* (Mughals) at Kamarupa.” The Ahoms, after their victories at multiple fronts, entered Kamarupa while Mansur Khan, the Mughal *Faujdar*, fled beyond the Manas River (Bhuyan 1933: 18). As a result, a vast quantity of war booty, including cannons, matchlocks, *Talwar*, spears, etc., was collected by the Ahoms (Gait 1905: 171). In fact, regarding this particular war booty, the *Tungkhungia Buranji* (Bhuyan 1933: 18) notes, “the spoils obtained in this engagement exceeded the amount captured in any previous war.” This was the last Ahom-Mughal armed engagement.

### **Talwar**

From the above discussion, it is evident that the Ahoms collected *Talwar* as war booty from the Mughals on multiple occasions, which according to Gogoi (2017) were later used by them. Some of these Mughal *Talwar* are at present preserved and displayed at museums across Assam, such as the Assam State Museum in Guwahati, the District Museum in Tezpur, the District Museum in Mangaldoi, and the Ahom-Tai Museum in Sivasagar. A detailed description and analysis of these *Talwar* is given below:

### ***Talwar 1 (Figure 1)***

The *Talwar* is at the Assam State Museum in Guwahati (Accession no. ASM:303). It is divided into two parts—blade and hilt. Its full length is 91 cm. Its blade is curved and single-edged, and it has an upswept tip. The blade’s full length is 73 cm., and its ricasso length is 3.9 cm. The blade’s point of percussion is approximately 24.3 cm. from its tip. The blade has a thick spine up to 53.5 cm. from the base of the blade; this part has a double fuller cross-section. The remaining spine is thin; this part has a lenticular cross-section. The blade’s width at its base is 4.5 cm., its two-third width is 3.6 cm. and its one-third width is 3.5 cm. The blade’s thickness at its base (measured from the spine section) is 6.2 mm., its two-third thickness is 4.5 mm., and its one-third thickness is 1.2 mm. There is rust in the blade with multiple chipping on its edge.

The hilt is made out of iron. Its full length is 18 cm. The hilt comprises of grip, crossguard, S-shaped knuckle guard, langet, two globular quillons, circular disc-shaped pommel, and a curved tail. The grip’s full length is 8 cm. It has a diamond cross-section. The crossguard length is 10.8 cm., while the langet length is 6 cm. The hilt has a disc-shaped pommel. Its diameter is 7.2 cm.; below it is a curved tail of 4 cm. in length. The peculiarity of the hilt is its knuckle guard, which is on the blunt side of the blade.



**Figure 1: *Talwar 1* displayed at Assam State Museum in Guwahati. Photo: Sauradeep Nath**

### *Talwar 2 (Figure 2)*

The *Talwar* is at the Assam State Museum in Guwahati (Accession no. ASM:306). It is divided into two parts—blade and hilt. Its full length is 86.7 cm. Its blade is curved and single-edged and has an upswept tip. The blade's full length is 75.3 cm., and its ricasso length is 3.4 cm. The blade has a triangular cross-section, and its point of percussion is approximately 25.1 cm. from its tip. The blade's spine has a long fissure in it. The blade's width at its base is 3.8 cm., its two-third width is 3 cm. and its one-third width is 2.9 cm. The blade's thickness (measured from the spine section) at its base is 6.4 mm., its two-third thickness is 3.5 mm., and its one-third thickness is 1.02 mm. There is rust in the blade with signs of multiple chipping in its edge.

The hilt is made out of iron. The hilt's full length is 11.4 cm and it comprises of grip, crossguard, langet, two quillons, circular disc-shaped pommel, and a small tail. The grip's full length is 7.4 cm. The grip has a diamond cross-section. The crossguard length is 9 cm., while the langet length is 4 cm. The hilt has a disc-shaped pommel. Its diameter is 6.5 cm.



Figure 2: *Talwar 2* displayed at Assam State Museum in Guwahati. Photo: Sauradeep Nath

### *Talwar 3 (Figure 3)*

The *Talwar* is at the Assam State Museum in Guwahati (Accession no. ASM:301(1)) It is divided into two parts—blade and hilt. Its full length is 87.5 cm. Its blade is curved and single-edged and has an upswept tip. The blade's full length is 73 cm., and its point of percussion is approximately 24.3 cm. from its tip. The blade has two adjoining fullers near the spine. The length of one fuller is 68 cm., while the length of another is 52 cm. The blade, therefore, has a double fuller cross-section. The blade's width at its base is 3.9 cm., its two-third width is 3.6 cm., and its one-third width is 4 cm. The blade's thickness (measured from the spine section) at its base is 5.4 mm., its two-third thickness is 5.4 mm., and its one-third thickness is 1 mm. There is rust in the blade, and there is also multiple chipping. The blade's tip is also broken.

The hilt is made out of iron. Its full length is 14.5 cm. The hilt comprises of grip, crossguard, langet, two quillons, circular disc-shaped pommel, and a curved tail. The grip's full length is 7.5 cm., and it has a diamond cross-section. The crossguard length is 8 cm., while the langet length is 4 cm. The hilt has a disc-shaped pommel. Its diameter is 6 cm. The curved tail below the pommel is 2 cm. in length.



Figure 3: *Talwar 3* displayed at Assam State Museum in Guwahati. Photo: Sauradeep Nath



### ***Talwar 4 (Figure 4)***

The *Talwar* is at the Assam State Museum in Guwahati (Accession no. ASM:304). It is divided into two parts—blade and hilt. Its full length is 87 cm. Its blade is curved and single-edged, and it has an upswept tip. The blade's full length is 71.5 cm. The blade's point of percussion is approximately 23.8 cm. from its tip. The blade has a thick spine up to 52.5 cm. from the base of the blade; then, it tapers down the tip. The blade has two adjoining fullers near the spine. Therefore, the blade has a double fuller cross-section. The blade's width at its base is 3.5 cm., its two-third width is 3.2 cm., and its one-third width is 3.3 cm. The blade's thickness at its base is 6.5 mm., its two-third thickness is 3.9 mm., and its one-third thickness is 1.2 mm. The blade is rusted and it has multiple chipping in its edge.

The hilt is made out of iron. Its full length is 16.5 cm. The hilt is composed of a grip, crossguard, C-shaped knuckle guard, langet, two quillons, circular disc-shaped pommel, and curved tail. The grip's full length is 8 cm., and it has a diamond-shaped cross-section. The crossguard length is 8.5 cm., while the langet length is 6 cm. The hilt has a disc-shaped pommel. Its diameter is 7 cm. The curved tail below the pommel is 2.5 cm. in length.



**Figure 4: *Talwar 4* displayed at Assam State Museum in Guwahati. Photo: Sauradeep Nath**

### ***Talwar 5 (Figure 5)***

The *Talwar* is at the Assam State Museum in Guwahati (Accession no. ASM: 2953). It is divided into two parts—blade and hilt. Its full length is 89 cm. Its blade is curved and single-edged and has an upswept tip. The blade's full length is 73 cm., and its ricasso length is 2.5 cm. The blade's point of percussion is approximately 24.3 cm. from its tip. The blade has a thick spine up to 49.5 cm. from the base of the blade. This part has a double fuller cross-section. The remaining part of the spine is thin and thus it has a lenticular cross-section. The blade's width at its base is 4 cm., its two-third width is 3.2 cm., and its one-third width is 3.6 cm. The blade's thickness at its base is 6.4 mm., its two-third thickness is 4.4 mm., and its one-third thickness is 2.2 mm. The blade is rusted.

The hilt is made out of iron. Its full length is 16 cm. The hilt comprises of grip, crossguard, S-shaped knuckle guard, langet, two globular quillons, circular disc-shaped pommel, and a curved tail. The grip's full length is 7 cm. The grip has a diamond cross-section. The crossguard length is 9.5 cm., while the langet length is 6 cm. The knuckle-guard is S-shaped, and its length is 9 cm. The hilt has a disc-shaped pommel. Its diameter is 7 cm. The curved tail below the pommel is 2 cm. in length.



**Figure 5: *Talwar 5* displayed at Assam State Museum in Guwahati. Photo: Sauradeep Nath**

### *Talwar 6 (Figure 6)*

The *Talwar* is at the District Museum in Tezpur (Accession no. DMT: 94). It is divided into two parts—blade and hilt. Its full length is 94 cm., and its weight is 0.5 kg. The point of balance is approximately 49 cm. from the blade's tip. The blade is curved and single-edged and has an upswept tip. The blade's full length is 77 cm., and its ricasso length is 4 cm. The blade's point of percussion is approximately 25.6 cm. from its tip. The blade has a thick spine up to 55.5 cm. from the base of the blade; this part has a fuller cross-section. The remaining portion of the spine is thin, and it has a lenticular cross-section. The blade has a fuller which runs through the flat of the blade. The fuller length is 67 cm. The blade's width at its base is 4 cm., its two-third width is 3 cm. and its one-third width is 2.5 cm. The blade's thickness at its base is 3.1 mm., its two-third thickness is 2.8 mm., and its one-third thickness is 2.4 mm. Observation reveals a warp in the blade. The blade has rust but displays no sign of chipping.

The hilt is made out of iron. Its full length is 17 cm., and it comprises of grip, crossguard, langet, two quillons, knuckle guard, disc-shaped pommel, and a small ring. The grip's full length is 7 cm., and it has a diamond cross-section. The crossguard length is 8.3 cm., while the langet length is 5.3 cm. The knuckle-guard is inverted S-shaped, and its length is 10 cm. The hilt has a circular disc-shaped pommel. Its diameter is 6 cm. The small ring below the pommel is 2.5 cm. in length.



Figure 6: *Talwar 6* displayed at District Museum in Tezpur. Photo: Sauradeep Nath

### *Talwar 7 (Figure 7)*

The *Talwar* is at the District Museum in Tezpur (Accession no. DMT: 213). It is divided into two parts—blade and hilt. Its full length is 93.5 cm., and its weight is 0.9 kg. Its point of balance is approximately 64.5 cm. from its tip. The blade is curved and single-edged, and it has an upswept tip. The blade's full length is 78.1 cm., and its ricasso length is 2 cm. The blade's point of percussion is approximately 26.03 cm. from its tip. The blade has a thick spine up to 48.1 cm. from the base of the blade; this part has a double fuller cross-section. The remaining part of the spine (30 cm.) is thin; this part has a lenticular cross-section. The blade has two adjoining fullers, which run through the flat of the blade. The length of both the fullers is 66.5 cm. The blade's width at its base is 4 cm., its two-third width is 3.3 cm., and its one-third width is 3 cm. The blade's thickness at its base is 6 mm., its two-third thickness is 3.2 mm., and its one-third thickness is 2.1 mm. Observation reveals chipping and rust in the blade.



The hilt is made out of iron. Its full length is 21 cm., and it comprises of grip, crossguard, langet, two globular quillons, knuckle guard, circular disc-shaped pommel, and a curved tail. The grip's full length is 7.5 cm., and it has a diamond cross-section. The crossguard length is 9 cm., while the langet length is 7.5 cm. The knuckle-guard is inverted S-shaped, and its length is 9.5 cm. The hilt has a circular disc-shaped pommel. Its diameter is 6.6 cm. The curved tail below the pommel is 5 cm. in length.



Figure 7: *Talwar 7* displayed at District Museum in Tezpur. Photo: Sauradeep Nath

### *Talwar 8 (Figure 8)*

The *Talwar* is at the District Museum in Mangaldoi (Accession no. unavailable). It is divided into two parts—blade and hilt. Its full length is 84.5 cm. The blade is curved and single-edged and has an upswept tip. Its full length is 72 cm. The blade's point of percussion is approximately 24 cm. from its tip. The blade's width at its base is 3.7 cm., its two-third width is 3 cm., and its one-third width is 2.8 cm. The blade's thickness at its base is 3 mm., and its two-third thickness is 2.6 mm. (the blade's one-third thickness could not be comprehended). Observation reveals that the blade may have a fuller but it could not be identified due to its poor condition. The blade is rusted and has a chipped edge.

The hilt is made of iron. Its full length is 17 cm., and it comprises of grip, crossguard, langet, disc-shaped pommel, and a small tail. The grip's full length is 7.6 cm., and it has a diamond cross-section. The crossguard length is 7.6 cm., while the langet length is 5 cm. The hilt has a disc-shaped pommel which is dislocated and broken at the center. The diameter of the pommel is 5.9 cm. The small tail below the pommel is 1.5 cm. in length.



Figure 8: *Talwar 8* displayed at District Museum in Mangaldoi. Photo: Sauradeep Nath

### *Talwar 9 (Figure 9)*

The *Talwar* is at the Ahom-Tai Museum in Sivasagar (Chamber 6: 50(1)). It is divided into two parts—blade and hilt. Its full length is 86.3 cm., and its weight is 0.3 kg. The point of balance is approximately 61 cm. from the blade's tip. The blade is curved and it has an upswept tip. The blade's full length is 74 cm., and its ricasso length is 6 cm. The blade's thickness at its base is 6.9 mm., its two-third thickness is 4.7 mm., and its one-third thickness is 3.2 mm. The blade's point of percussion is approximately 24.6 cm. from its tip. The blade's width at its base is 4.3 cm., its two-third width is 3.4 cm., and its one-third width is 3.2 cm. The blade also has a fuller which runs through the blade's flat. Therefore, the blade has a fuller cross-section. The fuller length is 48.8 cm. The blade is rusted but has no signs of chipping.

The hilt is made out of copper. The hilt comprises of grip, semi-circular quillon, crossguard, langet and pommel. Its full length is 12.3 cm. The hilt has an engraving of floral and leaf designs. This engraving, however, is erased in some parts. The grip's full length is 5 cm., and it has a diamond cross-section. It is minimal in length and is designed like a leaf. The hilt has a semi-circular quillon on one side while the other side is broken. The crossguard length is 8 cm., while the langet length is 6.5 cm. The langet extends from the quillon and is concave in shape. The uppermost part of the langet has three clover designs and two small protruding lumps on both sides. The hilt has a circular disk-shaped pommel. Its diameter is 7.5 cm. The pommel is loosely held to the grip. The grip is off-centered. At the top of the pommel, there is a small ring.



Figure 9: *Talwar 9* displayed at Ahom-Tai Museum in Sivasagar. Photo: Sauradeep Nath

### *Talwar 10 (Figure 10)*

The *Talwar* is at the Ahom-Tai Museum in Sivasagar (Chamber 6: 50(2)). It is divided into two parts—blade and hilt. Its full length is 92.5 cm., and its weight is 0.5 kg. The point of balance is approximately 61 cm. from the blade's tip. The blade is curved and single-edged, and it has an upswept tip. The blade's full length is 77.3 cm., and its ricasso length is 5 cm. The blade's thickness at its base is 3.9 mm., its two-third thickness is 3.5 mm., and its one-third thickness is 2.7 mm. The blade's base is uneven throughout the blade. The blade's width at its base is 3.9 cm., its two-third width is 3.3 cm., and its one-third width is 3.4 cm. The blade's point of percussion is approximately 25.6 cm. from its

tip. The blade has a double fuller that runs through the blade's flat. Therefore, the blade has a double fuller cross-section. The full length of both the fullers is 70.4 cm.

The hilt is made of iron, and its full length is 15.2 cm. Its components are langet, quillon, grip, pommel, and a curved tail. The grip is 8.2 cm in length and is shaped like a leaf. Its cross-section is diamond. The langet is 6.3 cm. in length extending from the quillon and is concave in shape. The uppermost part of the langet has three clovers and two small protruding lumps beside it. The hilt also has two globular quillons on both flanks. The crossguard length is 8.5 cm. The hilt has a circular, disk-shaped pommel with a diameter of 8 cm. and a curved tail extending from it.



Figure 10: *Talwar 10* displayed at Ahom-Tai Museum in Sivasagar. Photo: Sauradeep Nath

### Other Variant of Ahom Sword

The above-mentioned description provides details of *Talwar* preserved and displayed in museums across Assam. Yet, the Ahoms not only used swords collected as war booty, such as *Talwar* but also swords of Ahom origin and those acquired as tribute. The swords of Ahom origin were those which they brought from their native land Mongmao; and which they continued forging after the establishment of the Ahom kingdom in the 13th century CE. These swords had their unique Ahom features, and their names, such as *Hengdang* is elicited in the *Assam Buranji* (Bhuyan 1945: 4). *Hengdang* is a single-edged curved sword, that has a blade with an upswept tip while its hilt is of equal length to the blade (Figure 11). A *Hengdang* could be divided into three parts—blade, hilt, and scabbard. The blade's components include—ricasso, cutting edge, spine, and the tip. The hilt's components are a wooden grip and a ferrule. The scabbard, on the other hand, is made of wood or bamboo and is inlaid with metal wrapping. There are two specimens of *Hengdang* preserved and displayed in the Assam State Museum in Guwahati (Accession no. ASM: 314).



Figure 11: *Hengdang* displayed at Assam State Museum in Guwahati (ASM: 314). Photo: Sauradeep Nath





Figure 12: *Nakoi-da* displayed at Ahom Tai Museum in Sivasagar (Chamber 6: 52(3)) Photo: Sauradeep Nath



Figure 13: *Shikara-da* displayed at District Museum in Mangaldoi Photo: Sauradeep Nath

Besides swords of Ahom origin, there are also swords that they acquired as tribute from neighboring ethnic groups and kingdoms. For instance, after the Ahom campaign against the Dimasa kingdom in the 16th century CE, the Dimasa started to pay tribute in *Nakoi-da* (Phukan 1973: 88-90). *Nakoi-da* is slightly curved, and it has two parts—a blade and a hilt (Figure 12). The blade's design appears as a triangle while the hilt has two cross guards and a hollow tail. These are preserved and displayed at the Ahom Tai Museum in Sivasagar (Chamber 6: 52(3)) and Assam State Museum in Guwahati. Similarly, the Ahoms acquired *Shikara-da* as tribute from the Miri ethnic group (Phukan 1973: 88-90). It has a curved blade with a truncated tip and a round hilt (Figure 13). Only one specimen of *Shikara-da* is preserved and displayed in the District Museum in Mangaldoi (Accession no. DMM/AN/133/91).

## Conclusion

The Ahoms acquired *Talwar* as war booty from the Mughals. In the 17th century CE, the Ahoms came in conflict with the Mughals when the Mughal governor of Bengal, Qasim Khan launched an expedition against the Ahoms under Syed Hakkim and Syed Aba Bakr. This conflict continued over the years and ended during Supatpha's reign (1681 CE-1696 CE) who invaded the Mughals at Kamarupa. The Ahoms, were victorious while the Mughal *Faujdar* fled beyond the Manas River, thus ending the Ahom-Mughal conflict. During the conflict, a vast quantity of war booty, including cannons, matchlocks, *Talwar*, spears, etc., was collected by the Ahoms.

But the question is, can a collected war booty be considered an Ahom-edged weapon? The answer is—yes, it can be for Ahom-edged weaponry was a conglomeration of three types of weapons. These were edged weapons of Ahom origin, such as *Hengdang*, *Jathi*, etc.; edged weapons collected as war booty, such as *Talwar*, etc.; and edged weapons acquired as tribute, such as *Nakoi-da*, *Shikara-da*, etc. According to Gogoi (2017), the Ahoms used the collected weapons, either as war booty or tribute, in combat. Hence, it is reasonable to argue that the edged weapons collected as war booty can also be included in Ahom weaponry. Besides, classifying the Ahom-edged weapons into these three types

expands the study's scope and does not limit the Ahom-edged weapons to just swords and spears. Instead, such a classification helps to understand the Ahom interaction with neighboring kingdoms and ethnic groups with whom there was an exchange of weapons and other articles.

However, apart from the name and its acquisition as a war booty from the Mughals, there is no information about *Talwar*. Hence, to limit the gap, details of ten *Talwar* preserved and displayed in the Assam State Museum in Guwahati, the District Museum in Tezpur, the District Museum in Mangaldoi, and the Ahom-Tai Museum in Sivasagar are furnished in the paper. From the discussion, it is evident that *Talwar* is a sword comprising of a blade and a hilt. Its blade is curved and single-edged, and has an upswept tip; while its hilt comprises a grip, crossguard, S-shaped knuckle guard, langet, two globular quillons, circular disc-shaped pommel, and a curved tail.

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## Competing Interest

The authors have no competing interests.

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## Appendix-I

**Table 1: List of Weapons Studied in the Paper**

Sl. No.	Weapon	Corresponding Figure	Museum	Accession number
1.	Talwar	Figure 1	Assam State Museum, Guwahati	ASM: 303
2.	Talwar	Figure 2	Assam State Museum, Guwahati	ASM: 306
3.	Talwar	Figure 3	Assam State Museum, Guwahati	ASM: 301(1)
4.	Talwar	Figure 4	Assam State Museum, Guwahati	ASM: 304
5.	Talwar	Figure 5	Assam State Museum, Guwahati	ASM: 2953
6.	Talwar	Figure 6	District Museum, Tezpur	DMT: 94
7.	Talwar	Figure 7	District Museum, Tezpur	DMT: 213
8.	Talwar	Figure 8	District Museum, Mangaldoi	-
9.	Talwar	Figure 9	Ahom Tai Museum, Sivasagar	Chamber 6: 50(1)
10.	Talwar	Figure 10	Ahom Tai Museum, Sivasagar	Chamber 6: 50(2)
11.	Hengdang	Figure 11	Assam State Museum, Guwahati	ASM: 314
12.	Nakoi-da	Figure 12	Ahom Tai Museum, Sivasagar	Chamber 6: 52(3)
13.	Shikara-da	Figure 13	District Museum, Mangaldoi	DMM/AN/133/91

Note: Talwar at District Museum Mangaldoi do not have an accession number