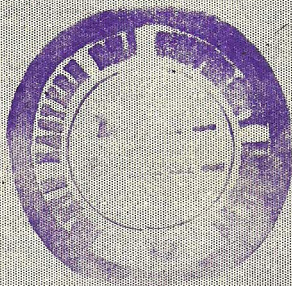


History of
American
Baptist
Mission in
North-East
India

Volume - Two

MILTON S SANGMA

**A HISTORY OF
AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSION IN
NORTH-EAST INDIA**
(Volume-Two)



MILTON S. SANGMA

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PREFACE

This is the second and the last Volume of the series. These two Volumes are the product of long studies extending over more than two decades. Inspiration for this study was initially derived from assignments given to me to write articles for Church Souvenirs, Journals and Periodicals on various aspects of the activities of the American Baptist Mission in North-East India. The formation of the North-East India History Association in 1979 created more incentive for more extensive studies for wider public. Introduction of a Course in M.A. on 'History of Christianity in North-East India' also added a fillip to the work. Except some authoritative works by few Theologians whose perspectives are different, the near absence of study by the social scientists also excited me to undertake this study of great importance, without the knowledge of which, the social and cultural changes that affected the people of North-East India especially the hill tribes, would not be properly understood in its historical perspective. This work is therefore carried out, in a sense, to fill up this lacunae. However, this is not the only Foreign Mission that worked in North-East India. There were many other Foreign Missions operated in different parts of N-E India, and unless all of them are brought under scrutiny, the work on this aspect of history will not be complete.

The American Baptist Mission was ^{one of} the first Foreign Christian Mission which set up permanent Mission Centres in different parts of N-E India, though they never came to work for the people of N-E India. They cast their eyes on the Shans of Upper Burma and the Chinese of South China as their fields of missionary activity. It was only when they realised the absurdity of reaching Upper Burma from Upper Assam that

they turned their attention to the Brahmaputra valley as the alternative field of Missionary activity.

When the American Baptist Missionaries finally decided to make Assam as their Mission field in 1841, the whole of N-E India was offered to them for their Missionary activity with a promise of protection of their lives and property by the British officials. But the limited resources at their command and the lack of Missionary personnel were the two constraints which compelled them to confine their Missionary activities only to the limited areas of the Brahmaputra valley, the Garo Hills of Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur and a few outlying villages of Arunachal Pradesh bordering Assam. Therefore, this Volume is also confined to the study of the Missionary activities in secular fields in these parts of N-E India only.

When the American Baptist Missionaries began their work in the Brahmaputra valley, they began with open preachings in the bazaars, streets and in the villages to the teeming millions of the people. But when this method failed to bear any fruit, they switched on to other methods, such as, opening of schools, publication of literature in local languages, translation and publication of religious texts and the Bible, and the opening of dispensaries and hospitals and other humanitarian works. These methods were adopted by them as other methods of evangelisation. Otherwise, they could not have come here just to give education and literature to the people they had never heard nor seen. Their mission was clear. It was to convert people into Christianity. Therefore, this volume deals with the history of education, literature, medical care and other humanitarian works as organised and run by the American Baptist Mission as adjuncts to their basic objective. From this point of view, this is the first of its kind, and in a sense, it reflects the current stage of research in a vast expanding field of social sciences.

The sources for this work are numerous ranging from diaries, personal and official letters, extensive correspondence, jubilee reports, triennial, biennial, and annual reports of the Missionaries in the field, other Missionary papers and discussions, to many published and unpublished works. Out of these myriad sources, I have not picked and chose only those materials that suited me but reproduced *ad verbatim* the

reports given by those who were involved in the work and then the conclusions drawn. As a student of history, I have found it more interesting and stimulating in writing about people and institutions based on empirical data, or, of which, one finds himself a part rather than writing about strange peoples, places and institutions. The amazing phenomenon in this work is to see how selfless devoted work of a handful of white Missionaries has brought about profound changes in the social and cultural life of the people of N-E India, especially of the hill people.

I thankfully acknowledge my indebtedness to my colleagues of the Department of History, NEHU, for their encouragement, and to my students of History of Christianity in North-East India, for deriving inspirations from my class lectures and their inquisitiveness. I also thank Shri K.M. Rai Mittal of Mittal Publications, New Delhi, for bringing out this volume without delay.

MILTON S. SANGMA

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