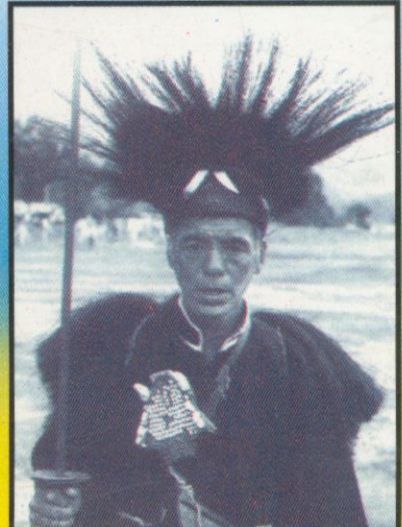


Survey of Research in History on North-East India 1970-1990

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David R. Syiemlieh

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**SURVEY OF RESEARCH
IN HISTORY
ON NORTH EAST INDIA 1970-1990**

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FOREWORD

The Advisory Committee of the NERC-ICSSR at its meeting held on November 22, 1991, decided to review the published literature on North East India in the fields of Geography, Political Science, Sociology, History and Economics during the period 1970-1990, and sponsor the studies. Scholars in Geography, Political Science, Sociology, History and Economics were identified and the review of published literature in their respective fields was entrusted to them.

We have already brought out three monographs in this series. These are entitled (i) *Survey of research in Political Science on North East India (1970-1990)* by Professor L. S. Gassah, (ii) *Survey of Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology in North East India (1970-1990)* by Dr. Nikhlesh Kumar, and (iii) *Survey of Research in Geography on North East India (1970-1990)* by Dr. A. K. Bhagabati and Bimal K. Kar of the University of Gauhati.

The Survey of Research in History was assigned to Dr. David R. Syiemlieh of the Department of History, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong. Dr. Syiemlieh has published a number of books and a large number of research articles on North East India. We now offer his *Survey of Research in History on North East India (1970-1990)* to students, scholars and to all others interested in the study of the region.

The years 1970-1990 were very productive so far as publications in History are concerned. Dr. Syiemlieh has divided his study in five chapters. The first of these is Historical Background from 1805 onwards, the second is devoted to North East in

Indian Historical Writing, the third chapter deals with Assam and Around, and the fourth discusses researches relating to Hill States Periphery and Assam. Chapter five deals with select themes — Journals, Associations, Resistance, Nationalism and Integration. Needless to say that Dr. Syiemlieh has made his survey of researches as comprehensive as possible, starting from the pre-historic period of the region to the present. He has covered most branches of the history of the region that has been covered by the scholars during the period.

I would like to thank Dr. Syiemlieh for accepting our offer and completing the monograph. I am certain that this survey of Historical Research on the North East will be quite useful for all those interested in the subject, more particularly research students and teachers.

Shillong
Dated: 21 September 1999

Jai Prakash Singh
Hon. Director
NERC - ICSSR

PREFACE

The Advisory Committee of the Indian Council of Social Science Research North Eastern Regional Centre, Shillong, in its meeting held on 22 November 1991 decided to initiate a series of *Review of Literature on North East*, specific to the disciplines of Sociology, Geography, Political Science, Economics and History. The reviews could not be completed during 1991-1993 for various reasons and a fresh start was made in 1995 to identifying scholars to complete the reviews.

The extent of the work assigned and preoccupation to complete other committed academic programmes and publications has delayed the submission of this review on History. For this I crave the indulgence of the ICSSR-NERC for their patience and encouragement to complete the review.

The scope of the review has been to collate and comment on histories of the region generated during 1970-1990, either in the form of dissertations, thesis or in book form both printed or mimeographed and in articles printed in journals having a bearing on the North East. This review is confined therefore to a region, with a time frame and makes reference to publications in the English language. There being very many languages and scripts used in the region, to have gone beyond material available in English, in Assamese, Khasi, Manipuri, Garo and other languages would have been a daunting task and would have required a multilingual team of researchers.

As the library work for the project progressed I became aware that the subject History had to be covered in its many disciplines, archaeology, numismatics, ancient, medieval, modern and up to the contemporary times. My lack of familiarity with some streams of this discipline may be reflected in the review, which need not be interpreted as my lack of interest in these areas of historical enquiry. The sheer size of material that has come out in print during these years on the subject would cover shelves of library space. Not all the material could be noted for inclusion in this review as some volumes of journals were difficult to find. It speaks of the condition of our libraries and their inability to offer scholars better retrieval methods and preservation of printed material. Due to travel constraints I had hoped that the study would be assisted by information of M.Phil./Ph.D. dissertations/theses, their authors, title and years of award. Letters were sent out to the Heads of History Departments and the Controller of Examinations of four Universities in the region other than the North Eastern Hill University, for which information was at hand. Sadly, not one reply was forthcoming. Consequently this study has not been able to note researches submitted for the M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees.

The history of the North East has been written by historians and others either qualified or dabbling in the subject. This review has a preference to historical studies done by acknowledged historians. Mention is also made of aspects of history featuring in books and journals not authored by historians if found to have had some significance either in its findings or its interpretation.

Gratefully acknowledged is the Indian Council of Social Science, North Eastern Regional Centre for commissioning me to do this report. Prof. J. P. Singh, presently its Honorary Director was encouraging and as a colleague in the discipline read through the entire draft, made corrections and gave suggestions. Dr. C.J. Thomas, the ICSSR-NERC Dy. Director constantly enquired of its progress and he and his staff provided much needed support. I also acknowledge the help rendered by the library staff of the Sacred Heart Theological College, Shillong; Dibrugarh

University Library; North Eastern Hill University and the Department of History, NEHU, for its book collection under the Special Assistance Programme. Discussions with Prof. J.B. Bhattacharjee were useful and Prof. Mahadev Chakravarty of Tripura University provided an extensive bibliography on Tripura. Mr. Joseph F. Khongbuh has been a patient but perfect gentleman in typing the draft and final report. To these friends I owe a great debt.

Shillong
25 September, 1999

David R. Syiemlieh

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CHAPTER I

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

Historical studies and research of North East India may be traced to the early decades of the 19th century. It was soon after British control was exercised over the Brahmaputra Valley that Captain George Edward Westmacott, Junior Assistant to the Agent of the Governor-General North East Frontier published his "Description of Ancient Temples and Ruins at Charduar in Assam" in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*.¹ While this has been noted as perhaps the first historical inquiry, Westmacott's unpublished 7 volumes "History of Assam" in the Department of Special Collections and Archives at King's College, University of Aberdeen had till recently gone unnoticed.² Earlier some articles on the region were published in various issues of the *Asiatic Researches* and *Gleanings in Sciences*. These were not research publications. They were largely reports by British Civil and Military officers of the people and societies they encountered or were made to report on.³ The *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* continued this trend though it also encouraged more scholarly papers. Of these the studies by F. Hannay, E. Dalton, Godwin Austin, J. Coggin Brown, J. Cockburn need special mention for their pioneering studies on prehistory and archaeology. Captain R. Boileau Pemberton's *The Eastern Frontier of British India*, Calcutta, 1835; Alexander Mackenzie's, *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of North-East*

Frontier of Bengal, Calcutta, 1884 (which was an elaboration of his earlier *Memorandum on the North Eastern Frontier of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1869, and Robert N. Reid's, *History of the Frontier Areas Bordering on Assam 1883-1941*, London, 1942, were the trilogy of the history of British relations with the people of this 'expanding' frontier. The narratives of John Peter Wade, "Geographical Sketch of Assam", *Asiatic Annual Register*, London, 1805; John Butler, *A Sketch of Assam with some Account of the Hill Tribes*, London, 1847; Francis Hamilton, *An Account of Assam*, London, 1820 (re-printed Gauhati, 1940) and many more are at best source material rather than history. The list of similar publications is too exhaustive to attempt an assessment here of the historical content of journals, reports, accounts and memoirs published in the last century and in the first half of the present century. Though many of these writings were not history in the strict sense of the term their historical information is invaluable for a reconstruction of the past.⁴

The writing of history of the North East is a relatively recent development. The narration of significant events of the past and its writing *albeit* in not very scientific lines, goes into antiquity. The Ahoms entering the Assam Valley in 1228 came with a script which they used to narrate their past in the various Ahom *Buranjis*, their location, translation and publication of which has been a commendable effort of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Government of Assam. Tripura's *Rajamala* has chronicled that former princely state's past. Researchers on Manipur cannot but go back to *Leithak Leikharon*, a literary text of the 18th century which was a compendium of myths, legends, genealogy and folklore. From this text has derived two others: *Cheitharol Kumbaba* and *Ningthourol Lambuba*.⁵ *Bijoy Panchali* (Meitei Puran) is another chronicle of Manipur composed in Bengali by poets of the Manipur court.⁶ Non-literate societies in the Brahmaputra and Barak Valley and the hills of the region retained their history in oral form. Folklorists, historians and other social scientists are skillfully using folk tradition to account for the history of the Nagas, Khasis, Garos, Bodos and Mizos.

Historical research on North East India may be said to have started with Edward Gait's *Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam*, Shillong, 1897; which reviewed the various studies that had been conducted till just before the turn of the century. It was followed by *A History of Assam*, London, 1906. It attempted a panorama view of Assam's past covering a history of the ancient dynasties, Ahom and British rule and short narrations of the tribes. It also attempted a chapter on economic history. Gait is credited with starting empirical historiography of the region.⁷ The use of this book is noticed in its many editions and reprints.⁸

Though not history but ethnographical in nature and content, a series of studies on some of the major tribes of then Assam made pioneering research into the life and customs of the people. These studies on the Naga tribes, Garo, Khasi, Bodo, Mikirs and Naga tribes of Manipur were commissioned by Government in the early part of this century and written by civil servants and missionaries. Despite some views today that these monographs do not quite portray the tribes under study none of these ethnographic studies have had sequels with the depth the original have. A further contribution of these monographs were the folk stories in the Roman scripts with English translations that were appended to each volume.⁹

Historical research was dominated in the 1930s–1940s by S. K. Bhuyan. His works can be categorized into three main divisions: historical, biographical and miscellaneous. Between 1930–1938, he compiled, collated and edited 11 *Buranjis*. In 1928, he published *Early British Relations with Assam: A Study of the Assam Records of the East India Company* (Shillong). In 1940, he published Francis Hamilton's, *An Account of Assam* (Shillong). An ardent nationalist he reviewed the historical developments between the Ahoms and the Mughal's attempt to invade Assam in *Lachet Barphukan and his Times*, Gauhati, 1947, and *Atan Buragohain and His Times: A History of Assam from the Invasion of Mir Jumla in 1662–63 to the Termination of Assam Mogul Conflicts in 1682*, Gauhati, 1957. His thesis approved for the Ph.D. degree of London University in 1938 was published many

years later as *Anglo-Assamese Relations 1771-1826*, Gauhati, 1949. These and his other reports, memoirs in English and a voluminous spread of historical writings in Assamese has earned him a proud place in Assam's literary history.¹⁰

Bhuyan was reflecting a development in historical research that was both curiously nationalistic and an exposition of British rule. He and other Assamese historians in Padmanath Bhattacharyya, editor of *Kamarupa Sasanavali* and a critical review of Edward Gait's *A History of Assam*; Benudhar Sharma, who located and edited Wade's *An Account of Assam*; Kanak Lal Barua, *Early History of Kamarupa*, Shillong, 1933; Banikanta Kakati and Hem Chandra Goswami were the prominent historians of that time. Though it was the English in India who pioneered the establishment of research societies in India, notable of which was the Asiatic Society, the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti (the Assam Research Society) was one of the earliest and still surviving societies established entirely by Indians.¹¹ Founded in April 1912, by Mahamahapodhyaya, Pandit Rajsekhar Kaviratna, Pandit Padmanath Bhattacharyya Vidyavinod, N.N. Basu, K.L. Basu and others, the Society fostered a study of Assam's past that was pioneering but insular in scope. A recent review of some of these works comments that the phase "is characterised more by patriotic zeal and enthusiasm, rather than a critical approach to the study of the past. Nevertheless, the relevance of regional tradition was recognised only through such ventures."¹²

Some years later further encouragement for historical research came with the establishment in June 1928 of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, the precursor of which was the Narayani Handique Institute of Historical and Antiquarian Studies. Starting as its Honorary Assistant Director, S.K. Bhuyan started collecting a large number of manuscripts ranging in subjects from religious treatises, to chronicles, works on astrology and traditional medicine. By 1933, he had taken charge as Director with such interest in the past that provision had to be made for the preservation and study of artefacts. The Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti took the initiative in the establishment of the Assam State Museum at Gauhati (1940). The *Journal*

of the *Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti* (from 1933) provided the forum for a number of scholars to publish their researches particularly those relating to archaeology and ethnography.¹³

The post 1947 period did not immediately provide an opening for historical studies despite the changed political situation other than what may be termed as reactionary historiography to British rule by some nationalist historians of Assam.¹⁴ P.C. Choudhury with his *History and Civilization of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century AD*, Gauhati, 1959, started a trend with the title of his book. That same year was published U.N. Gohain's *Assam in the Ahom Age*, Jorhat, 1959. N.N. Acharya covered the same span of time with *History of Medieval Assam*, Gauhati, 1966. *A Cultural History of Assam*, Nowgong, 1951, was B.K. Barua's study of Assamese culture. L. Devi made an interesting study in *Ahom Tribal Relations*, Gauhati, 1968, and P. Gogoi did an indepth study on *The Tai and the Tai Kingdoms*, Gauhati University, 1968. Often non-historians are gifted with a better sense of interpretation of the past. R.M. Nath's *Background of Assamese Culture*, Gauhati, 1948, interpreted very lucidly (without going into details as historians often do) the social and cultural background of the Assamese. A year later *Glorious Assam*, Shillong, 1949, was published in which Nath covers both Assamese and tribal art. The histories of the period after 1826 continued largely to be political. In this genre are A.C. Banerjee *Eastern Frontier of British India*, Calcutta, 1946, R. M. Lahiri, *The Annexation of Assam 1824-54*, Calcutta, 1954, and B.C. Chakravorty, *British Relations with the Hill Tribes of Assam*, Calcutta, 1964. This trend was continued by H.K. Barpujari first with *Assam in the Days of the Company*, Gauhati, 1963, followed by the three volume *Problem of the Hill Tribes: North East Frontier*, Gauhati, 1970, 1976, 1982, of which more will be discussed in a later chapter.

Some of the historians mentioned above also tested their researches through the Indian History Congress. Founded in 1935, the Indian History Congress had a threefold objective to serve as a clearing house of Indian historical research, to give impetus to research on an all India basis.

and to prepare a comprehensive history of India. Historians from the region began attending its sessions from Calcutta 1939. Prominent among these members were K.N. Dutt who presided over the Modern Indian section in 1961, H.K. Barpujari, S.K. Barpujari, and J.B. Bhattacharjee, D.P. Barooah and N.N. Acharya. The 1959 session held at Gauhati had a Local History Session which was presided over by S.K. Bhuyan.¹⁵

When Assam was being written about it covered in some histories, composite Assam. Invariably, however, the studies were confined to the Brahmaputra Valley with little mention of the hills or of the Barak Valley which received even scant attention. It would require historians from among the Nagas, Khasis, Garos, from Cachar, Manipur and Tripura and the Barak Valley to fill in the lacunae. The history of these peoples and states may be traced to Abdul Ali's *Notes on Early History of Manipur* (1923). It is an important work on the Manipuri relations with the British in the 18th century. The anthropologist Verrier Elwin enthused later researchers to go into the history of the Nagas etc. with India's *North-East Frontier in the Nineteenth Century*, Bombay, 1959, and *Nagas in the Nineteenth Century*, Bombay, 1969. He painstakingly collated a variety of sources on the subjects in research typical of his style. The Jaintias had their first historian in S.M. Ali, *History of Jaintia*, Dacca, 1954, in a slim but nonetheless very informative book. To the term Jaintia, Hamlet Bareh added the more generic Khasi and covered a wider research in *The History and Culture of the Khasi People*, Shillong, 1967. It attempted to trace the history of the tribe from their migration, settlement, political structure and covering a wide span of time from antiquity to the early years of independence. Bareh's strong point is his depth of knowledge of Khasi history and that he has drawn from oral tradition. Similarly, A.C. Choudhury, in *Srihatter Itivritta*, Sylhet, 1317 BS covered the history of ancient and medieval Barak Valley. Kailash Chandra Sinha did the same with his commentary in Bengali of the *Rajamala* in 3 vols., Calcutta, 1896. From the 1970s a whole array of other histories of the entire region would be forthcoming.

In part this fresh development was linked to the political reorganisation of the North East beginning with distinct status for Manipur and Tripura as Chief Commissionerships (1950) and subsequent changes in 1956 and 1963. Nagaland got its identity as a state in 1963. The most significant of these changes, however, was the ushering in the states of Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya and the Union Territories of Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh in 1972 by the North-Eastern Areas (Re-Organisation) Act, 1971. Gauhati University established in 1948 was given relief with the subsequent establishment of Dibrugarh University (1965), the North-Eastern Hill University (1973), the Jawaharlal Nehru University Post-Graduate Centre at Imphal, now Manipur University (1980) and the Calcutta University Post-Graduate Centre at Agartala, now Tripura University (1987). Each of these universities built up strong Departments of History with a preference for the history of the region. Post-Graduate teaching apart, guidance of research at the M.Phil. (only at NEHU) and Ph.D. programmes has stimulated research as never before. Liberal scholarships from various funding agencies from state governments, the Indian Council of Social Science Research, the Indian Council of Historical Research and the Universities have enabled many to pursue research.¹⁶

Special mention may be given to two Associations that have enabled historians, interested in the history of the region to meet and discuss their findings. The formation of the North East India Council for Social Science Research in 1974, though not exclusively purposed for history has been bringing in its *Journal* and proceedings of seminars an impressive array of historical literature. The North East India History Association was formed (following a request from the Indian History Congress to start regional history association) on 27 April 1979 at a meeting of historians who had come to participate in a seminar organised by the Department of History of the North-Eastern Hill University. The response to and impact of these and some other academic bodies will be taken up subsequently.

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9. J.H. Hutton, *The Angami Nagas*, 1921, reprint, Delhi, 1967; J.H. Hutton, *The Sema Nagas*, 1926, reprint, Delhi 1969; J.P. Mills, *The Ao Nagas*, 1926, reprint Bombay 1973; J. Mills, *The Lhota Nagas*, London, 1922; J.P. Mills, *The Rengma Nagas*, London, 1922; W.C. Smith, *The Ao Naga Tribe of Assam*, London, 1925; T.C. Hodson, *The Meitheis*, 1908, reprint Delhi, 1975; T.C. Hodson, *The Naga Tribes of Manipur*, 1911, reprint Delhi, 1974; P.R.T. Gurdon, *The Khasis*, 1907, reprint Delhi, 1975; A. Playfair, *The Garos*, 1909, reprint, Gauhati, 1975; S. Endle, *The Kacharis*, 1911, reprint, Delhi, 1975.
10. The North East India History Association organised a Colloquium on S.K. Bhuyan on the centenary of his birth at its 15th Session at Doimukh, 1994. The paper read by Sheila Borah was informative of the extent of work done by S.K. Bhuyan. Her paper and that of M. Sharma will be published shortly.
11. O.P. Kejariwal, "The Indian History Congress and Historical Research in North East India", *Proceedings of the North East India History Association*, Eighth Session, Kohima, 1987.
12. Gautam Sengupta and J.P. Singh (eds.), *Introduction to Archaeology of North East India*, Shillong, 1991, p. XV.
13. For details see G. Sengupta, "Studies in the Early Art of North East India: An Overview", *Proceedings of North East India History Association*, Eleventh Session, Imphal, 1990, pp. 75-76.
14. Hem Barua, *The Nineteen Forty Two Upeaval in Assam*, Jorhat, 1964; K.N. Dutta, *Landmarks of the Freedom Struggle in Assam*, Gauhati, 1958, reprinted, Gauhati, 1969, and much more literature on this subject in Assamese.
15. For details of membership, papers read and an analysis read O.P. Kejariwal, "The Indian History Congress and Historical Research in North East India", *Proceedings of the North East India History Associations*, Kohima, 1987, pp. 33-91.

16. The proliferation of historical research in the region as indeed elsewhere in India was encouraged by a requirement of the University Grants Commission that in order for college and university teachers to benefit from new pay scales a research degree was required. This surge towards attaining M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees has affected the quality of historical research.

CHAPTER II

NORTH EAST IN INDIAN HISTORICAL WRITING

Speaking in Cuttack, Orissa in 1953, Dr. S.K. Bhuyan, historian and Director, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam, stressed the fact that Eastern India was on the periphery of historical inquiry in India. He remarked:¹

Hindu India appears to have been primarily dominated by the civilization of the Gangetic Valley, but the vitalizing civilization of Eastern India is still an unknown fact. It is high time that the message of Eastern India should be brought home to the entire country so that India's political and social thoughts may be reinforced by new ideas and ideologies.

A crusader for finding Assam a befitting place in the historical writings of India, he had a year earlier as President of the Indian History Congress expressed that it was his religious zeal "to let the world know the great and good things of Assam which forms an integral part of Mother India."² When the Indian History Congress met in Gauhati in December 1959, S.K. Bhuyan once again harped on the point of the necessity of acquainting historians with the history of Assam.³

Why had North East India not found the position in historical writings this Assamese historian hoped for? The writing of Assam's history and of its neighbouring states though removed from its nascent stage, as the earlier chapter indicates, had not progressed sufficiently to draw the

attention of historians writing histories of a 'national' character. Though it would not be correct to argue as one writer has, that poverty of material "which has an all India bearing" resulted in the region being "overlooked in general histories of India" — the same author reasons "that this region has not so far been an inherent part of the historical consciousness of India."⁴ The imbalance in Indian historical writing with bias on the Gangetic valley and the neglect of this region has been analysed by Tarasankar Banerjee. In his Presidential Address to the Eleventh Session of the North East India History Association he pointed out various reasons responsible for creating the imbalance in modern North East Indian historiography. These were; shift in the political fulcrum in the 19th century; the British legacy of Indian historiography; stunted growth of regional histories in the North East; conformist and traditional approach of the earlier generation of historians of the region; the lack of institutional drive in the region till Independence and finally the comparative political and administrative insularity of the area under study till recently.⁵

These reasons, however, should be no excuse why North East India, if not Assam with its fairly well documented histories by Gait, Basu, Barua, Bhuyan and Choudhury should not be worthy of mention in Indian history. It would only be fair first to mention some of those who have included Assam in the studies. Vincent Smith in four pages of *The Early History of India*, (Oxford, 1957), attempted a review of Kamarupa even going beyond its ancient history to a mention of the Ahom 'Invasion' of Assam to Mir Jumla's intrusion from the west.⁶ R.S. Tripathi's popular textbook *History of Ancient India*, (Delhi, 1967) the first edition appeared in 1942) and *History of Kanauj* (Benares, 1937) showed his familiarity with E. Gait's and K.L. Barua's histories of Assam apart from Yuan Chwang's *Si Yu Ki* which narrates the Chinese traveller's visit to the Kingdom of Kamarupa. Radha Govinda Basak's *The History of North-Eastern India* extending from the foundation of the Gupta Empire to the rise of the Pala dynasty of Bengal, (Calcutta, 1967), is somewhat misleading in its title. It does not discuss the present North East other than a chapter on

Kamarupa. This geographical term relates to the North Eastern territories at that historical period. The authors of *An Advanced History of India* do not quite go into details but Kamarupa under Bhaskaravarman and its subsequent decline is integrated into the history of the Maukaris, Palas and Senas. The early medieval history of Kamarupa is covered till 1533 when Turko chieftains of Bengal attempted expansion into the Brahmaputra valley.⁷ Another popular textbook for college students, A.L. Srivastava, *The Mughal Empire (1526-1863 A.D.)*, (Agra, 1979), completely ignores the Mughal campaign in Assam. Perhaps this omission was because only Lower Assam came under Mughal control for some years thereafter remaining a frontier state independent of the Mughal Empire. J.M. Mehra, *Advanced Study in the History of Medieval India*, Vols. I & II (New Delhi, 1984, 1986), has carefully woven the relations of the Turko-Mughals with the Ahoms.

Another *Advanced History of India* gives fifteen lines to Assam apart from other scattered references, one of which concludes "For many centuries after Bhaskaravarman, nothing is known of Assam except that it was a part of Pala dominions!"⁸ It is not expected that any detail should be given to regions and dynasties in Romila Thapar's *A History of India*, Vol. I (Delhi, 1990). However, the omission of Bhaskaravarman from this popular book would send the message that if some earlier historians have considered this monarch's life worthy of mention, present day general histories consider it insignificant. This book treats Assam literally as a peripheral state⁹ and like some foreign accounts of India informs readers that "Kamarupa Assam was yet another mountainous region which developed into an independent kingdom. . ."! When had the high hills, around the valley come under Kamarupa's suzerainty? The neglect of incorporating Assam, Manipur and Tripura which were emerging as states into similar texts was not only absent from political histories. A.L. Basham's *The Wonder that was India* (Calcutta, 1996), while mentioning Harsha's contemporary in Kamarupa has only to say that Assam was known for breeding and rearing of silkworms. Similar treatment is given in A.L. Basham" edited *A Cultural History of*

India (New Delhi, 1984). It was expected Sri Sankaradeva, Assam's Bhakti reformer would find some detail. His name is dismissed in three words. If this mention is some consolation for Assam, it is not so for the hill areas of North East India, which one is made to believe is not part and parcel of India's rich and varied cultural heritage. Here one is reminded of Lallanji Gopal's comment, "On account of their geographical situation north eastern parts of India have been out of focus (emphasis mine) of Indian History. The developments in the central areas have only occasionally touched the course of events of their parts."¹⁰ The lacunae in the books referred above is to some extent repaired by the details provided in Suniti Kumar Chatterjee's *The Place of Assam in the History and Culture of India* (Gauhati, 1970).

School children reading the widely prescribed NCERT published histories of India,¹¹ are introduced to Assam in these texts. *Ancient India* has updated its account to the Ambari excavations in Gauhati to push settlement in the sixth and seventh centuries. *Medieval India* includes Assam in the chapter "Struggle for Empire in North India" apart from its illustration of maps showing Kamrup as outside the Sultanate boundary. There is even a section on North-East and East India (pp. 223-234) taking the historical sequence of events from the advent of the Ahoms to Mir Jumla's invasion of Assam. The incorporation of Assam, Cachar and Jaintia into British India and something of the relations with Manipur is covered in *Modern India*.

The Cambridge historiography has all but ignored Assam and the hills of North East India. To take one example, *The Cambridge Economic History of India*,¹² Vol. 1, c.1200-c.1750, was not able to integrate the medieval economy of Assam into its history. Indeed there is not a single reference to trade, coinage, agriculture and other economic activities of the region before Amalendu Guha's delightful saving grace as an Appendix!¹³ Its sequel¹⁴ repaired the damage by notices on the Ahom economy and agrarian relations and changes under British men. Tea, naturally is given importance but it stops here. There is no other reference to Assam's economy before and after

Independence, particularly no notice of the discovery of oil and the setting up of India's first refinery at Digboi or details of the changed demographic composition of the two valleys consequent on large scale migration and settlement. When the earlier *Cambridge History of India* series were under preparation a chapter was written on Assam. It was not published for want of space and remains as a manuscript in a British archive.¹⁵

When one reads the modern History of India one finds refreshing relief with due attention being given to the region. Explanations for this may be that much of the region were directly or indirectly brought under an Indian administration and that information of their history was more easily available. Whether it is P. Spear *Oxford History of Modern India* (Oxford, 1965); J. Brown, *Modern India* (New Delhi, 1984); Anil Chandra Banerjee, *History of India* (Calcutta, 1985), or the more detailed treatment found in the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan series, *History and Culture of the Indian People, Age of Imperial Kanauj*, Vol. IV, particularly volumes IX and X,¹⁶ the North East begins to find more frequent reference.

Two approaches are evident in general studies on India's freedom struggle and response to it of the people of North East India. The impression created from reading books such as Bipan Chandra *et al.*, *India's Struggle for Independence* (New Delhi, 1989); and R. Suntharalingam, *Indian Nationalism: An Historical Analysis* (New Delhi, 1983), is that the region did not have anything to do with India's nationalist movement. Not even the widely acclaimed and readable *Freedom Struggle*¹⁷ has reference to any political participation from beyond Bengal; not a mention of some of the tribal groups of North East that resisted expanding British control or of the peasant resistance such as that of Phulaguri in Assam. Fortunately, the prize winning *Modern India 1885-1947* of Sumit Sarkar (Delhi, 1983),¹⁸ R.C. Majumdar's edited *Struggle for Freedom* (Bombay, 1969), and others narrate and interpret in various ways the role of the people of the North East India in the freedom movement from peasant resistance movements, tea garden response to Gandhi's call for Non-Cooperation, their participation

in the Civil Disobedience and Quit India Movements and events leading to the partition of the sub-continent. Amalendu Guha has further improved the lapse in general histories by his Presidential Address in the Modern History Section of the Indian History Congress in 1984 by interweaving some of the aspects of the history of this region in his discussion of Indian nationalism in general.¹⁹

Where historians have not been able to go into both descriptive and analytical accounts of the North East in histories having as their scope a broad history, it has been possible to do this in a variety of histories of the region in what may be called regional, local or micro history, fitting these within the context of Indian history or unrelated except in themselves. While S.K. Bhuyan was pleading for Assam's place in Indian history the clock has come full circle in more recent times by an over-emphasis and at times an insular approach to historical research on the region, state, people, and down to even smaller levels of historical enquiry. H.K. Barpujari cautioned historians of the region with his address to the delegates at the first annual session of the North East India History Association, Shillong, 1980. He said:²⁰

There has been a general tendency in our local studies to magnify regional achievements, to exalt local heroes and to glorify local languages, customs and usages out of proportion to their intrinsic value. Regional study should be complimentary not competitive. It should be undertaken as part of the Indian history as a whole; in fact, a comprehensive history of India would be possible only on the bed-rock of regional history.

The use of regional histories is explained in another Presidential Address to the North East India History Association. Hiralal Gupta a stalwart of both the Indian History Congress and the NEIHA said in Agartala 1985.²¹

National history without regional history will be truncated and incomplete and regional history in isolation will be without moorings. There is no dichotomy between the two. Regional history provides raw material for national history. It merges into the national history, retaining its identity and inter-connection with other regions.

In the last three decades much research has been conducted and their findings published pertaining to the history of North East India. In view of this Tarasankar Banerjee's advice in yet another Presidential Address to the NEIHA was to develop a clear perception of what the members of the Association understood as regional or local history *vis-à-vis* the general history of the country. He believed that there is more difficulty with the idea of regional history itself. "Its goal and scope have not been satisfactorily set. One has to be conscious about the use and abuse of the idea."²² K.M. Pannikar, note of caution not to elevate regional glories as a result of their specialization with certain period or certain areas²³ has been taken into consideration by historians of the region. This was clearly expressed by a member of NEIHA when he opined that an insular outlook could lead to attitudes not very conducive, to the nation or to the craft of historical writing. He has, however, in line with other regional historians pressed home the point "that the historian of the north-east is also the historian of India,"²⁴ thereby removing the so called stigma of regional history and making their researches part of the Indian historical tradition.

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
3. S. K. Bhuyan, Presidential Address, 15th Session, *Indian History Congress*, December, 1959.
4. O.P. Kejariwal, 'The North-East in Indian Historiography: The Need for a Corrective', *Proceedings of the North East India History Association*, Seventh Session, Pasighat, 1986, p. 21.
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6. *Ibid.*, pp. 383-386.
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8. Cited in O.P. Kejariwal, *op. cit.*, p. 19. See K.A. Nilkanta Sastri and G. Srinivasachari, *Advanced History of India*.

9. See page 224.
10. Foreword to J. P. Singh and Nisar Ahmad, *Coinage and Economy of North Eastern States of India*, Memoirs Series, No. 7. Numismatic Society of India, Varanasi, (n.d.).
11. R. S. Sharma, *Ancient India*, New Delhi, 1993, Satish Chandra, *Medieval India*, New Delhi, 1994, Bipan Chandra, *Modern India*, New Delhi, 1976.
12. Edited by Tapan Raychaudhuri and Irfan Habib, New Delhi, 1991.
13. *The Medieval Economy of Assam*, pp. 478-505.
14. Dharma Kumar (ed.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol. II, c. 1757-c.1970, Delhi, 1984.
15. The original article is deposited at the Public Records Officer, Kew, Richmond.
16. R.C. Majumdar (Gen. Ed.), *British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*, Vol. IX, Bombay, 1963, Vol. X, Bombay, 1989, covers sections on Manipur, Burma and Assam's annexation, the frontier state, including a large section on the North Eastern Frontier, Assamese literature and tea garden labourers in Assam.
17. Bipan Chandra, *et al.*, *Freedom Struggle*, New Delhi, 1972.
18. Sumit Sarkar's extremely popular *Modern India*, has received the H.K. Barpujari prize for the best book of its year by the Indian History Congress.
19. O.P. Kejariwal, *op. cit.*, p. 22.
20. See *Proceedings of the North East India History Association*, First Session; Shillong, 1980, p. 12.
21. *Proceedings of the North East India History Association*, Sixth Session, Agartala, 1985, p. 20.
22. T. Banerjee, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
24. O.P. Kejariwal, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

CHAPTER III

ASSAM AND AROUND

Edward Gait's *A History of Assam* written early this century was sufficiently comprehensive given the time it was written and the material available to him. The next half century produced no history on these lines. Nonetheless remarkable progress was made in historical studies of the region, thematic, societal and geographically based. If the writings of historians noted in the earlier chapter were those of the first generation historians, a second generation may include the historians of the quarter century following Independence. These writers continued both the historical traditions inherited by them while at the same time branching with a whole array of historical enquiries.

The idea of first writing a comprehensive history of Assam was mooted in the early 1950's by S.K. Bhuyan. He held informal discussions with scholars to start a project of this nature. For various reasons it did not materialise. A second attempt was made in 1974 with financial support from the Indian Council of Social Science Research on a project on the history and culture of Assam.¹ Apparently this project too did not go beyond the planning stage. A comprehensive history of Assam was first written by an individual who stole a march over the editors of the multi-volume study.

The object of S.L. Barua in writing *A Comprehensive History of Assam* (New Delhi, 1985), was to acquaint readers of the society and culture of the Brahmaputra valley in

particular and north-east in general. She admits that some themes had only been touched upon. An ambitious project, it was not possible for the author to go into details as the study has attempted to cover a span in time from pre- and proto-history to contemporary times. Taking readers to a study of the sources used, this comprehensive history then attempts an account of the early history of Assam, with a fairly detailed narrative of Pragjyotisha/Kamarup, followed by a political history of the Varmans, Salastambhas and Palas. The ancient history is closed with a chapter on society. The medieval history cover the Kochs, Ahoms, their struggle with the Mughals and the decay and fall of the Ahoms. This section also draws attention to the Ahom policy towards the neighbouring hill tribes and the administration in medieval Assam. This section concludes befittingly with the chapter on society and economy. The third broad category in time starts with the various resistance movements to British rule and the changes brought by the new regime. The author pays attention to the various agrarian revolts in Assam between 1860 and 1900 as a build-up to the growth of natural consciousness and Assam's participation in the freedom struggle with emphasis in their role in the Non-cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movements. The history is taken up to the Quit India Movement and till 1947. This section concludes with a study of the social and economic life of the people.

Though historical research on the Brahmaputra valley in particular and Assam as a whole had made substantial progress by the time this comprehensive history of Assam was being worked out, the study has not been able to use some important primary material that had become available, nor was there a more extensive use of secondary sources. The history has tended to be Brahmaputra valley-centric. Even if the Barak Valley is conveniently excluded and the hill region which was administratively linked with Assam for some time and had cultural and economic connections with the people of the Brahmaputra valley, is referred to in passing, the study does not give a fair account of, for instance, the Bodos, Mikirs and other communities in the valley. Concluding with developments

around Independence, the study is incomplete since the post-1947 phase is essential for an understanding of the present political, social and economic situation in Assam. To be fair to the author for single-handedly writing this voluminous account, the book will serve as a useful text, an easy reference and a guide to further research and studies. The title of the book indicates this, giving an option in "A" for the authoritative "The".

Apparently Prof. Swarnalata Barua was not alone in preparing a broad history of Assam. The publication Board, Assam at Guwahati had entrusted the research towards the publication of what was initially intended to have been a four volume history of Assam, to the doyen of historians of North-East India – Professor H. K. Barpujari. He recalls in the Preface of the first volume, that the task before him was formidable. Apart from its planning he faced difficulties in getting contributors to writing the various chapters. In a project of "national importance" the best talents of the country were required. The history was planned on the lines of the Cambridge University Press series on Indian History. It was expected that the multi-volume history should represent the latest research on the subject.²

The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. 1, Ancient Period, edited by Prof. H.K. Barpujari has been received differently. While on the one hand historians have welcomed the first volume in a series which takes the history to 1919,³ the scope and research into the history of Ancient Assam is disappointing. Despite collaboration from well established historians working in this field or its related areas, one does not find that "old explanations have been re-examined, re-assessed and even revised in the light of the data recently unearthed," as its editor claims.⁴ This may be checked in the bibliography of volume 1. The research has not been updated – there is not even a reference to *A Comprehensive History of Assam* that came out some years earlier. In part the explanation to this serious lapse of updating the literature is that many contributors were stalwarts in their own right but who might not have had access to the more recent studies, or had been out of touch with historical research of the region. Nonetheless the

articles by D.C. Sircar, H.D. Sankalia, S.K. Saraswati, S. Chattopadhyay, B.N. Puri, S.N. Sarma, J.M. Choudhury, B.M. Das, T.C. Sharma and H.K. Barpujari have made a connected narration and interpretation of Assam's ancient history.

This first volume of *The Comprehensive History of Assam* starts with an Introduction in three parts followed by chapters on pre-history, sources of the early history of Assam, an account of Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa and the epic myths and allied legends. Political history is downplayed with other chapters covering the socio-economic, religious life of the people. The chapters on language and literature, education, art, sculpture and iconography add variety to the history thereby giving it a comprehensive outlook. Plates illustrating the texts have been added. An appendix, "A Note on Ambari Finds" by T.C. Sharma and Gautam Sengupta brings readers to the recent archaeological excavations in Guwahati city.

For all their shortcomings the two volumes under review have become useful additions for the study of Assam's ancient past, and as one of the books has done, made a connection between antiquity and more recent history. Both texts have become indispensable for post-graduate students. The more discerning scholar will find in these books both inspiration for the efforts put into their writing and ample cause to critically evaluate their presentation.

Archaeology

Although some studies have been done on the historical remains and artefacts, our understanding of the archaeology of Assam and north-east India remains fragmentary. Till the time covered in this review there has been no authoritative book on the subject, nor has there been an attempt to piece together the numerous findings over a century and half of research on the subject. The importance of the location of the region as a corridor between the sub-continent and South East Asia was highlighted in the Indo-Pacific Prehistoric Congress in Poona in 1978. The Congress desired a more intense archaeological research programme in this region to realize the potentiality of the area.⁵

A Source Book of Archaeology of Assam and Other States of North Eastern India, published by the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti (Guwahati, 1984), is a compilation of reports reprinted from the *Archaeological Survey of India Annual Reports* and *Indian Archaeology — A Review*, both published by the A.S.I., New Delhi. The collection of reprints was published to mark the occasion of the XVI Annual Conference of the Indian Archaeological Society, Prehistoric and Quarternary Studies and VII Annual Conference of Indian History and Culture Society held jointly at Guwahati; from 8-11 December 1984. The editor of the volume, D. Chutia, Secretary of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti informs that the aim of the compilation was to acquaint scholars and general readers with the archaeological discoveries and related works done in the region. The first part of the book would fall outside the purview of this review as it reports publications before 1970. A slender section of the book has a report on archaeological activities in Assam after 1970. These relate to reports of excavations and preservation of monuments in the state of Assam and other North Eastern states between 1970-71 and 1979-80. Appendix III provides a list of monuments in Assam protected under State Legislation. The plates illustrating the texts are large and clear.

A companion volume *Readings in the History and Culture of Assam* (Guwahati, 1984), is a compilation of select papers and articles taken out from various issues of the *Journal of the Assam Research Society*. The editor has done a marvellous service by putting together papers not easily available to scholars. The writings of J.P. Mills, Pandit Padmanath Bhattacharya Vidyavinod, K.L. Barua, Rameswar Barua, Sarbeswar Kakati, Jogendra Ch. Das, R.M. Nath, Chandradhar Barooah, Premdhar Choudhury, N.K. Bhattasali, S.C. Goswami, Dinesh Ch. Sircar, T.K. Sarmah, P.C. Choudhury and Maheshwar Neog bring the reprints to 1960. Articles by R. Dev Choudhury and Dharmeswar Chutia, "A Note on the Archaeological Finds at Narakasura Hill" (1971); G.N. Bhuyan, "A Note on the Terracottas of Bhaitbari" (1972); C.D. Tripathi "A Pre-Ahom Chutiya Temple in North Lakhimpur District" (1974), and R.D. Choudhury's "Gold Objects from Singimari in Garo Hills

District" (1978) are the four articles that fall with this review.

A National Seminar on "The Archaeology of North East India" was held between 26-28 October 1988, at the Department of History, North Eastern Hill University. The first seminar of its kind, it attempted to take stock of existing knowledge to identify further areas of research and inquiry. It brought together geographers, geologists, ecologists, linguists, historians, anthropologists and archaeologists to explore various facets of the problem. In the process an authoritative corpus of writing was made available in the collection of papers and abstracts which with additions and editorial work was published three years later.⁶

T.C. Sharma is undoubtedly an archaeologist of some prominence in the region if not also recognised in India for the work he has put in to encourage the study and exploration of human past. His publications during the period under review are: "Recent advances in Pre-history and Archaeology of North East India, Presidential Address, XI Annual Conference of ISPQS, Guwahati, 1984"; "Diversity and Unity in North East India during Prehistoric Period", paper read at the Anthropological Society North East India, Guwahati (mimeographed); with H.C. Sharma he has also authored, "On the Discovery of Stone Age Sites in Central Garo Hills", *Journal of the Assam Science Society*, Vol. XIV, 1971; and with O.K. Singh, "Studies on prehistoric Archaeology of Garo Hills", *Journal of Assam Science Society*, Vol. XI, 1968. Two other important papers are "A Note on the Microlithic Industry of the Garo Hills" in *Senarat Paranavitana Commemorative Volume*, 1978; "The Lower Palaeolithic of North East India", *Resume des Communications*, IXth International Congress of Pre and Protohistoric Sciences, Nice, 1976.

His colleague in discipline, S.N. Rao has published an important article on the region. *Asian Perspective* published "Survival and Continuity of Neolithic Traditions of North-eastern India, Vol. XX, No. 2, 1979. The same Journal published S.K. Roy's, "Aspects of Neolithic Agriculture and Shifting Cultivation: Garo Hills Meghalaya" in Volume XXIV, No. 2, 1987.

Among the journals that cover the history of North East India the *Bulletin of the Assam State Museum*, Guwahati, has come out regularly, with invariably some articles on the archaeology and pre-history of the region. Volume V, 1985, has N. N. Acharyya's very interesting "New Light on the History of Khasi Hills and Jaintia Hills from the Original Oriental Letters" of the Ahom Raja Jayadhvaja Singh to his Jaintia counterpart Lalta Singh and replies, between 1662-1663. These relate to the Mughal invasion of Assam. Vol. VI 1985 incorporated the proceedings of the seminar on "The Necessity of Preservation of Nature and Cultural Heritage of Assam" held at Nagaon earlier in early April 1984. It also had a paper on "Architecture of Ancient Assam from Earliest Times to the 12th Century AD" written by N.D. Choudhury. The next volume, No. VII of 1985 has another of Rabin Dev Choudhury's papers, "Some Buddhist Sculptures preserved in the Assam State Museum"; N.N. Acharyya's "A Critical Study on the First Architecture of Medieval Assam"; and G. Hazarika's, "Preserving of Dwindling Ramparts: The Military Glory of Ahom Era".

Another proceedings of a seminar, this time on "Legends and Archaeology of North East" held at Mangaldoi, 28-29 July 1985, are presented in Volume VIII of the *Bulletin*. It has papers on various aspects of the theme written by D. Chutia, N.N. Acharya, A. Rajkhowa, J.N. Phukan, Sibananda Sarma, H.N. Dutta and Pradip Sarma. Volume IX, 1986, concentrates on the North Cachar Hills and the Barak Valley with articles by T.C. Sharma, J.N. Bhuyan, J. Acharjee, S. Sarma, A.U. Choudhury and N.P. Choudhury. The 1988 (Volume X) issue has an article by N.N. Acharyya "Vedic Rites and Rituals of Ancient Assam with Special Reference to Horse Sacrifice". The same issue has another piece on history by Sarharuddin Ahmed, "The Significance of the Word 'Asama' in the inscriptions of Assam."

A series of publications have of late been published on the archaeology and architecture of Assam and the other states in the region. Of these N.D. Choudhury's *Historical Archaeology of Central Assam* (Delhi, 1983), was followed by N. Deva Choudhury's work with the same title, Delhi, 1985. This is an extensive study of the archaeology of central

Assam. Illustrated with plates it describes the prehistoric and protohistoric remains and mentions specimens of fine art. P.C. Sharma's, *Architecture of Assam* (Delhi, 1988), adds another dimension to the study of Assam's ancient past. It studies the subject from the Gupta period to the end of Ahom rule. Manoranjan Dutta's *Sculpture of Assam* (Delhi, 1990), covers the religious concept and the pattern of temple sculpture, early sculpture of Assam, and medieval sculpture of Assam. Plates have illustrated the text. An aspect covered by the author mentioned above is elaborated by R. Das Gupta in *Art of Medieval Assam*, published earlier in Delhi, 1982. In the same series is Nilima Roy's *Art of Manipur* (Delhi, 1979).⁷

Numismatics

The interest in numismatics of North East India is limited to few individuals — in what seems to be an exclusive club. Of the more important publications on numismatics, *Coinage and Economy of North Eastern States of India* is edited by Jai Prakash Singh and Nisar Ahmed. It is a collection of papers presented at a seminar on the "Coinage and Economy of the North Eastern States of India", held at Shillong in November 1977 at the 65th Annual Session of the Numismatic Society of India. This Memoir Series No. 7 of the Numismatic Society appears to have been the first attempt to bring together the findings of contemporary numismatists into one volume. Papers cover Assam (by D.C. Sircar, R.D. Choudhury, Vasant Choudhury and Parimal Ray); nearby Bengal (by B.N. Mukherjee, Vasant Choudhury and Parimal Ray); Jaintia (A.N. Lahiri, Vasant Choudhury and Parimal Ray); Cachar (by A.N. Lahiri, Vasant Choudhury and Parimal Ray); Manipur (by Vasant Choudhury and Parimal Roy); Tripura (by Vasant Choudhury, Parimal Roy and Jahar Acharjee) and articles of general numismatic interest and on the economy of the region by J.B. Bhattacharjee, R.D. Choudhury, J.P. Singh, A.N. Lahiri, Vasant Choudhury and Parimal Roy. Plates I to XI illustrates the texts.

The Coinage of Tripura, edited by Ramanimohan Sarma is published by Numismatic Society of India in its series *Numismatic Notes and Monograph*, No. 17, Pt. 1, 1980. The collection covers the history of Tripura, coinage, coin types and geneology of the Tripura Manikya dynasty. Part II 1980, of the same series, *Coinage of Bengal and its Neighbourhood*, general editor Lallanji Gopal and edited by Jai Prakash Singh has Vasant Choudhury and Parimal Ray and Jahar Acharjee writing two papers on the coins of Tripura. D.C. Sircar and Jahar Acharjee jointly examine a silver coin of Megnanarayana of Kachar.

A useful guide to the study of coins of the region comes in RD. Choudhury (ed.) *A Source Book on the Numismatic Studies in North East India*, Volume 1 (Gauhati, 1986); Volume II (Gauhati, 1987). The two volumes are a collection of reprint articles on numismatics by authorities on the subject such as H.H. Wilson, H.E. Stapleton, K.L. Barua, Edward Gait, A.W. Botham and contributions made by many of those mentioned in the books mentioned earlier. Contributions also include those by Nicholas Rhodes and P.K. Bhattacharjee. Both volumes include plates illustrating the coins under study.

Jai Prakash Singh makes a departure from studying coins alone and examining the *Monetary Development in Early Assam* (Jorhat, 1989). The Asam Sahitya Sabha organised a series of lectures in memory of Prof. K.K. Handique. Prof. J.P. Singh who delivered these lectures in January 1985, divided the delivery into five lectures. Lecture 1 was on History and Chronology. The second on Monetary Development. The third studies the copper coins and catalogue of coins. The fourth lecture centered on gold coins. The fifth lecture was on the coins of Paglatek. The appendices of "Gifts in Ancient Assam", "Slaves in Assam", "Caltis and Kalitas" and "Markets in Kamarupa" add to the value of this presentation. Questions raised during the delivery of the lectures and J.P. Singh's replies are included in the appendices. Another important article of J.P. Singh, "Jayantia Coins and the Koch Historical Tradition: An Examination", was published in *Numismatic International Bulletin*, May 1988. A fairly detailed paper *The Coinage of*

Kachar was written by Nicholas Rhodes and published in *Numismatic Chronicle*, Volume 146, 1986.

Inscriptions

Maheshwar Neog and Mukunda Madhava Sharma have left their mark in compiling, translating and analysing inscriptions, making their volumes indispensable for students of the ancient history of Assam. Maheshwar Neog's edited *Prachya-Sasanavali* published by Publication Board Assam (Gauhati 1974), has an introduction in English (following the Sanskrit and Assamese texts). It is a first attempt at the compilation of a corpus of inscriptions on rocks, copper plates and other medium of eastern India (with emphasis on Kamarupa, Assam and Jaintiapur). The period covered by the collection 1228–1876 roughly is that of the Ahom rule. M. Neog made use of the *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, the *Journal of Ancient Indian History* and the various Buranjis to make the compilation. The *Prachya Sasanavali* provides texts of 126 rock and copper inscriptions and their contents in brief in Assamese and in English introductions. A Bibliography and illustrations completes this very useful publication. *Kamarupa Sasanavali* by D. Sarma (ed.) published by Publication Board Assam, is also a collection of ancient inscriptions from Assam.

Mukunda Madhava Sharma's *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam*, published by Gauhati University, 1978, is an anthology of the inscriptions of pre-Ahom ancient Assam, edited with notes and translations. The Sanskrit scholar provides a long introduction before translating the inscriptions and providing other information of their location, script, description and history. 22 inscriptions are studied, with 5 appendices on other inscriptions this large and well printed volume as the jacket of the book writes "is much more than a mere collection of sources, but a positive contribution to the historiography of the state of Assam". The numerous plates provided add to the value of this publication.

Ancient Assam

Where there apparently is a dearth of publications in the ancient history of Assam, reprints of books earlier published (before 1970) make up the void. We have already noted the Kamarupa Anusandhana Samiti's contribution — *Readings in the History and Culture of Assam*. The 1980s saw a flush of reprints, P.C. Choudhury's much acclaimed and useful, *The History of Civilization of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.* (Originally published 1958, Delhi, 1987), has become available for historians of the region. Nagendra Nath Vasu's *The Social History of Kamarupa* in three volumes was so long out of print (the New Delhi, 1986 reprints) was welcomed by readers. A third edition of B.K. Barua's *A Cultural History of Assam: Early Period* was brought out (Gauhati, 1986). Golap Ch. Barua's *Ahom Buranji* from the earliest times to the end of Ahom rule, with its parallel English translation, was reprinted (Delhi, 1985). Also reprinted is S.K. Bhuyan's *Tungkhurgia Buranji* or *A History of Assam 1681-1826* (Delhi, 1983).

Whereas the writing of ancient history was in vogue by the early group of historians of Assam, a decline is noticed from the 1970s. There are fewer publications in books and only occasional papers in journals, some of which have been noted in the *Bulletin of the Assam State Museum*. University journals for all their irregularity of publications have some articles on the history of the region, which will be discussed in an appropriate section later in this study.

Medieval Assam

As historical developments come closer to the present the research in the past draws larger number of researches. In the case of Assam, the advent of the Ahoms into the Upper Brahmaputra valley and their steady expansion and hegemony over the valley has become a dominating theme whether it be the comprehensive histories or other publications centering on Ahom history. S. Rajguru takes us into a study of socio-economic, political and religious life of Assam in *Medieval Assamese Society 1228-1826* (Nagaon,

1988). The book also has a chapter on Assamese literature. On almost similar lines is Satyendranath Sarma, *A Socio-Economic and Cultural History of Medieval Assam 1200-1800 AD* (Guwahati, 1989).

A part of political history is covered by Nirmal Kr. Basu. *Assam in the Ahom Age 1228-1826* (Calcutta, 1970), is largely a politico-economic and socio-cultural history. More detail is available in another work of that prolific author N.N. Acharyya. *The History of Medieval Assam from the 13th to the 17th Centuries* (New Delhi, 1984), is as he says a critical and comprehensive history of Assam during the first four centuries of Ahom rule "based on original Ashom sources". The book has a large section of the history of Assam and its relations with the Koches, Kacharis, Jaintias and Nagas. Among the Ahom leaders the name of Lachit Barphukan is remembered for the role he played in opposing the Mughal entry into the Brahmaputra valley. The life of the man and his achievements as captured by Maheshwar Neog in *Lachit Barphukan: The Victor of the Battle of Saraighat*, published by the Publications Division of the Government of India on freedom fighters (N. Delhi, 1983). The small tract meant for wide circulation has placed this Assam ruler in the list of Indian freedom fighters.

Two books of N.N. Acharyya though not exclusive to the medieval history of Assam cover fairly large sections of this time. *Historical Documents of Assam and Neighbouring States* (New Delhi, 1983) has extracts on Assam, Goalpara, Cooch Behar, Bhutan, Garo Hills, Cachar, Manipur, Jaintia Hills, Burma, the Naga Hills and the tribes of present day Arunachal Pradesh. A serious shortcoming of this publication is that it does not indicate details of where the extracts have been taken from. His other book, *A Brief History of Assam* (Guwahati, 1987), covers the events from the earliest times to the year 1983, with emphasis on early history. Here again there are no notes, references or bibliography.

The Ahoms were regarded for their administrative acumen, adjustment with neighbouring states and tribes and their military prowess. Administrative history is dealt with by A.C. Sharma in, *Tai Ahom System of Government* (Delhi,

1986). The book studies the norms and forms of the Ahom government with special reference to personnel administration. It is a comprehensive study of the subject. H.K. Barpujari in a small tract of 65 pages gives *An Account of Assam and her Administration 1603-1822 AD: A Documentary Study* (Guwahati, 1988). It provides Captain Welsh's Report of the expedition he made into Assam in 1794. S.K. Goswami has left his mark in *A History of Revenue Administration in Assam 1228-1826* (Delhi, 1986). A lone piece on historiography remains in Lila Gogoi's *The Buranjis: Historical Literature of Assam: A Critical Survey* (New Delhi, 1986). It lists the numerous Buranjis, classification, historical assessment, reflection of culture, literary and linguistic assessment and the historiography of the Ahoms. The Buranjis are the subject of Golap Ch. Barua's, *Ahom Buranji* (Guwahati, 1985), a reprint of a long out of print text.

D. Nath takes an unusual and welcome diversion from Ahom history to study the *History of the Koch Kingdom 1515-1615* (Delhi, 1989). This is an elaborate study of the Koch states located to the immediate west of Assam. He discusses its history over a century, affinities, formation of the state, a large section is given to its rulers, administration, society, economy and culture. Another interesting angle is taken by B.C. Kalita in *Military Activities in Medieval Assam 1200-1675* (Delhi, 1988). The dates cover the period shortly before the arrival of the Ahoms into the Brahmaputra valley to their conflict with the Mughals. Between S.N. Bhattacharjee's masterpiece *A History of Mughal North East Frontier Policy* first published in 1929 (reprinted Calcutta, 1994) were five decades before another book on the subject was published. Sushil Ch. Dutta worked on *The North East and the Mughals 1661-1714*, as a Ph.D. thesis at the North Eastern Hill University. The book with the same title was published, New Delhi, 1984. It examines Aurangzeb's policy towards the North East, Mir Jumla's expeditions, Ram Singh's campaign, the North East challenge to the Mughal forces and the impact these invasions and resistance had on local chronicles of the Ahoms, Bengal and Manipur.

Another of Maheshwar Neog's smaller but well written books in his inimicable style is *Sankaradeva*. Published by the National Book Trust (New Delhi, 1980), the paper back edition has, it is believed gone a long way in getting readers on this medieval Bhakti reformer of Assam. Yet another monograph of this prolific writer is *Socio-Political Events in Assam Leading to the Militancy of the Mayamariya Vaishnavas*. Published by the Centre of Studies in Social Sciences (Calcutta, 1982), the book are the lectures given by Maheshwar Neog under the S.G. Deuskar Lecture. The author studies the origins of militancy among the Mayamariyas — also called the Moamarias. He analyses the inter-relation of social events and political events. His lectures were topical since there has been in recent years a revival of interest among historians of medieval Ahom polity and society. Professor Amalendu Guha continued the debate on the downfall of the Ahoms in Occasional Paper, No. 84, "The Decline of the Ahom Kingdom of Assam 1765–1826". Presented at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, July 1986, the paper traces the steps towards the downfall in which the monarchy was principally at fault, coupled with the Burmese invasion of Assam; British intervention and the Anglo-Burmese War. This section on the late medieval history of Assam would not be complete without a reference to S. Dutta's *The Matak and their Kingdom* (Allahabad, 1985). Dutta narrates the socio-economic life, conflict of Matak allegiance, their challenge to the Ahom monarchy, a chapter on the spread of the Moamaria rebellion and the establishment of a Matak kingdom.

Modern Assam

Modern History being closer to the present has more relevance than the earlier phases. This is not to say that the medieval and ancient history has no connection with the present. When we are placed in the present with much more written of the immediate past, than the more remote past an attempt should be made to answer why this is so. For one thing the material from which modern historians draw their reconstruction of the past is much more abundant

and more easily available. Another factor could be that the immediate past – even pushing it back by a century and half, had events occurring in the region that have made it what it is today. For Assam a periodization with prehistory, ancient, medieval and modern is possible and historians have generally taken 1824–26 to be the start of the modern history to coincide with the start of British rule in Assam. However, caution must be applied to any attempt to periodize the histories of the tribal communities in Assam and in its surrounding hills.⁸

R.M. Lahiri's well read *The Annexation of Assam 1824-1854* (Calcutta, 1954), went out of print and a whole generation of students had either do without, search for or make copies of this useful text. Fortunately, a reprint was published (Calcutta, 1975). The author first put together an account of the British annexation of the Brahmaputra and Barak Valleys and some of the hills in this early phase of British imperialism. H.K. Barpujari's dependable text *Assam in the Days of the Company* covered almost the same period of history (1826–1858). It is a critical and comprehensive history of Assam during the East India Company's rule. First published in 1963 the book quickly ran out of print. A revised and enlarged edition was printed in 1980. Starting with the decline of the Ahoms the book takes readers through British control and expansion in Assam and around, the administrative and revenue structure, relations with hill chiefs, a section on Assam's economy and concludes befittingly with a chapter entitled "Dawn of a New Era" in which he looks at the influx of outsiders, their assimilation, the role of American Baptist missionaries in education and the first stirrings of nationalism among the Assamese. Another useful and timely reprint is S.K. Bhuyan's *Anglo-Assamese Relations (1771-1826)* (Gauhati 1949 reprinted, Gauhati 1974). It traces in detail the early interest the British and other European had in Assam and the continued concern the British had in Assam till 1826 by which date Assam by default came under that rule.

Political history is given much more detailed treatment in the three volume *Political History of Assam*. A project of the Government of Assam the history was completed in

four years when the third volume was published in early 1980. The first volume (Gauhati 1977) is edited by H.K. Barpujari and covers the consolidation of British paramountcy over Assam and the hills that came within the province's administration. It accounts for the incipient political activity and takes the history from 1826 to 1919, from the treaty of Yandaboo to the Government of India Act 1919. The second volume (Gauhati, 1978) is edited by Arun Ch. Bhuyan and Sibopada De. It deals with the gradual rupture in the imperial structure and provincial autonomy. The seven chapters give a searching and detailed account of not merely the intensification of the freedom struggle in Assam but also the process of change, socio-economic and political that was underway in this area between 1920 and 1939. The third volume also edited by Arun Ch. Bhuyan and Sibopada De takes the history into the closing years of Assam under imperial rule and the momentous developments that took Assam into 1947 and Independence. A part of the preface reads:⁸

We had . . . taken upon ourselves the whole task of recreating the story of freedom struggle with the fond expectations that it would generate in the green hearts of the new generation an indomitable urge to rediscover and to restore the great values and ideals that inspired a whole nation to rise together and defy even the most powerful imperialist power on earth.

The volume comes to an end rather abruptly with the Cabinet Mission plan and its fallout in Assam and the Sylhet referendum without going into what would have been an appropriate conclusion in the political activities just before and after 15 August 1947. Ten appendices provide useful material relating to the developments between 1940-1947.

With the background of the national movement in the not too distant past, historians have taken up research of the participation of the people of north-east India in the making of India's independence.⁹ B.B. Hazarika has given a detailed study of the political life of the people of Assam with emphasis on popular movements, Raj Mels, Sarvajanic Sabhas, Ryat Sabhas and the Assam Association. *The*

Political Life in Assam During the Nineteenth Century (New Delhi, 1987) was given financial assistance by the Indian Council of Historical Research, N. Delhi. Amalendu Guha's, *Planter Raj to Swaraj* (New Delhi, 1977) is also financed by ICHR written under the series of books to examine the role of the central and provincial legislatures during the freedom struggle. The sub-title of Amalendu Guha's book *Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam 1826-1947* situates the theme and time of the study. The author builds the narrative chronologically. At the same time he treats it thematically. The first three chapters provide the background for understanding of the colonial socio-economic structure at the entry point of Gandhian politics in Assam. The five chapters which follow cover the three decades before 1947 and shift from a study of society and economy to the politics of anti-imperialism in the area under study. Despite the many years work that event into the preparation of this text he has the humility to write "Mine is a spade work in anticipation of future research".¹⁰

While still at political history, it would be appropriate to introduce two books on Muslim participation in Assam politics. M. Kar has a detailed history on *Muslims in Assam Politics* (Delhi, 1990) on the problem of the immigration of Muslims into Assam and its impact on the politics of the valley. Chapters have details of Muslim migration, the politicization of immigration, the transfer of Sylhet and Cachar to an Assam administration, a detailed account on Md. Saadula, one time Assam Prime Minister and the Muslim participation in the freedom struggle. One can see the historical treatment in this book and compare it to the study by Bimal Dev and Dilip Lahiri *Assam Muslims: Politics and Cohesion* (Delhi, 1985), particularly the sources from which they draw their conclusions.

The Barak Valley does not feature much in the histories noted above. Geographically, distant and separated by high hills from the Brahmaputra valley it was during much of the last and into the present century, administered as part of the Assam province/state. Till date the only detailed study of Cachar, and erstwhile "native state" is J.B. Bhattacharjee's *Cachar Under British Rule in North East*

India (Delhi, 1977). It is the first critical and comprehensive history of Cachar between 1765–1947. It analyses in depth British policy towards Cachar in a common perspective with its neighbours. The book starts with Manipuri and Burmese occupation of Cachar, British paramountcy over the state, administrative and revenue measures, material progress of the people and the economic impact of British rule on Cachar.

British administration in Assam has been a dominant theme in historical inquiry K.K. Bhattacharjee's *North-East India: A Study* (New Delhi, 1983) is an account of administrative experiments in the region in the 19th and 20th centuries – though largely it is a study of the Assam Chief Commissionership between 1873–1921 (other than the period 1905–1912 when the Assam Commissionership was tagged on the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam). The social policy of British administration is dealt with by M.S. Sharma in *British Administration in North East India 1826–1874: A Study of their Social Policy* (New Delhi, 1985). Chapters relate to the people and education, the role of missionaries in social change, the emancipation of slaves and the nobility under the new environment.

The operation of the Assam Secretariat is the thesis of B.B. Datta-Ray, *Assam Secretariat 1874–1947: An Administrative History of North East India* (Calcutta, 1977). A student of political science he is one of many persons of that discipline who have felt comfortable to write history. D.D. Mali has studied *Revenue Administration in Assam* (Delhi, 1985). This is a study between the start of the Chief Commissionership of Assam, 1873, and the Government of India Act 1919, and its application to Assam. Shrutidev Goswami has gone into the details of certain *Aspects of Revenue Administration in Assam* (N. Delhi, 1987). Covering the period 1826–1874 it examines the poll tax, income tax, customs inland duties, opium, *Akbaree* and forest cesses. M.L. Bose has studied some other aspects of administration, land revenue, justice and police between 1874–1920 in *Development of Administration in Assam* (N. Delhi, 1985).

Surprisingly social history has few takers. *Social History of Assam* by M.L. Bose (N. Delhi, 1989), is one of the

few books that has made a study inquiry into this aspect. The study is an elaboration of a paper published in the *Journal of Historical Research*, Dibrugarh University, July 1978. It centres on the origins of ethnic identity and social tension during the period 1905-1947. The author has attempted to analyse the roots of the present day social and political upheavals in Assam. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed tremendous political economic and social changes. Tilottama Misra in *Literature and Society in Assam: A Study of the Assamese Renaissance 1826-1926* (Guwahati, 1987) examines the prelude to the renaissance, studies the contribution of the *Orunodoi* and secular trends in Assamese literature, social reform, the emergence of Assamese nationalism and assertion of identity.

Neither does economic history feature as important in the agenda of historians of Assam. We have noted Amalendu Guha's brilliant piece as an appendix in Dharma Kumar's (ed.) *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol. 1 and commented on Vol. II. Some other articles by Professor Guha will be noted in a section to follow on 'Select Themes'. An extensive study was prepared by Muhammed Abu B. Siddique and submitted as a doctoral dissertation by him to the University of Western Australia, Perth. The monograph has been published as, *Evolution of Land Grants and Labour Policy of Government: The Growth of the Tea Industry in Assam 1834-1940* (New Delhi, 1990). The study emphasises Government's policy with regard to land and labour. The main argument of the author is that the discovery of tea was possible only at an enormous social and economic cost of the people.

Historians have been cautious in writing on the 'Assam Movement' of the early 1980s for the events are too close to the present for an objective history. This has, however, not deterred writers with other academic and professional affiliations literally churning out a mass of books on the Assam problem. Profulla Roy Choudhury's *The North East Roots of Insurgency* (Calcutta, 1986) sees traces of the problem from the British rule of Assam and updates it to the present. The notes and references were useful. D.P. Kumar of the *Statesman* writes *Challenge to India's Unity: Assam*

Students Agitations and Government (Delhi, 1990). T.S. Murthy attempts a more academic approach in *Assam The Difficult Years* (New Delhi, 1983). Amiya Kr. Das takes a different angle with *Assam's Agony: A Socio-Economic and Political Analysis* (New Delhi, 1982). An obviously pro-agitation text is to be found in Mridul Bhattacharjee and Sanjeeb Goswami, *Assam's Agonies and Grievances* (New Delhi, 1985). It provides illustrations of photo scenes of police brutality. Another journalistic work is Saroj Chakravarty's *The Upheaval Years in North East India: A Documentary Indepth Study of Assam Holocasts 1960-1983* (Calcutta, 1984). It is amazing the speed with which the 'research' is undertaken and the 'timely' publication of many of the books mentioned above and others not listed.¹¹ One book that has attempted a more detailed and scholarly study of the problem and perhaps taken some time to write is Dilip Kr. Chattopadhyay's *History of the Assamese Movement Since 1967* (Calcutta, 1990).¹²

Biographical history has been given some attention in Assam. We have noted studies relating to the medieval period. Maheswar Neog has a second biographical sketch. He had given an assessment of the strivings of the Assamese pioneer Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan towards the Assamese people's upliftment in education, language and polity. The book *Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan*, published by the Assam Sahitya Sabha (Jorhat, 1977), includes Phukan's pleas for Assam and Assamese with the complete text of "Observations on the Administration of Assam" which was appended to A.J. Moffat Mills' *Report on the Province of Assam* (Calcutta, 1954). Biographical sketches of a number of Assamese leaders are provided in the four volume *Dictionary of National Biography*, edited by S.P. Sen, Vol. 1 (Calcutta, 1972), has entries by Hem Barua on Gopinath Bordoloi, pp. 203-204; S.C. Rajkhowa on Nabin Chandra Bordoloi, pp. 204-206; J.N. Choudhury on Rajani Kanta Bordoloi, pp. 206-207; K.N. Dutt on Anandaram Dhekiyal Phukan, pp. 456-457; Birendra K. Bhattacharjee on Holiram Dhekiyal Phukan, pp. 457-459. In Volume IV (Calcutta, 1974) S. Chabha has an entry on Chandranath Sarma, pp. 155-159 and L.P. Dutta has a short sketch on

Krishna Nath Sarma, pp. 159-160. The first entry in this volume is a biographical sketch by D.P. Barooah on Syed Md. Saadulla, pp. 1-2.

Among the best of biographical histories is N.K. Barooah's *David Scott in North East India 1802-1831: A Study in British Paternalism* (New Delhi, 1970). The author centres on the role played by this Scotsman in the establishment and consolidation of the East India Company rule over Assam, Cachar, Sylhet, the frontier Garos and relations with other hill tribes. Submitted as a Ph.D. thesis to the London University, the publication apart from its scholarly input, is a fine piece of literature.

Quite distinct is John Rowntree's own memoir *A Chota Sahib: Memoir of a Forest Officer* (London). The forest officer has left a delightful account of his career in Assam some years before 1947. He has left this account "because I felt that some of my experiences were worth recording and that a description of the day to day life of the ordinary folk who helped to keep the wheels turning." Another memoir that has been reprinted in Adam White, *A Memoir of the Late David Scott*. Published by the DHAS (Gauhati, 1988) the original of which was written and published in 1832 soon after Scott's death in 1831, the reprint lacks the attractive print of the original.

The study of Assam's History is incomplete without a reference to its connections with the neighbouring hills and 'native' Indian states of Manipur, Tripura and the Khasi states. That connection and the histories covering Assam's periphery will be discussed in the chapter which follows.

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1. H.K. Barpujari (ed.), *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. 1, Ancient Period, Publications Board, Assam, Guwahati, 1990, Preface, p. ix.
2. *Ibid.*, p. x.
3. *The Comprehensive History of Assam* has till date been published in five Volumes. Vol. II (1992) takes the history to 1826, Volume III (1994) covers the administrative, socio-economic and cultural developments from the 13th century to 1826; Volume IV (1992) studies the history from Yandaboo to Dyarchy (1826-1919). The last

volume (1993) delineates internal developments, political, economic, social and cultural renaissance which made the transition in Assam from the medieval to modern age.

4. *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, Vol. 1, p.
5. Jai Prakash Singh and Gautam Sengupta, *Archaeology of North-Eastern India*, New Delhi, 1991, p. xiii.
6. *Ibid.* Jai Prakash Singh (ed.), "National seminar on the Archaeology of North East India", 26-28 October 1988, Papers and Abstracts, NEHU, Shillong.
7. Two other books in this series may be noted. These are M. Alemchiba (ed.), *The Arts and Crafts of Nagaland*, Kohima, 1968 and H. Bareh, *The Art History of Meghalaya*, Delhi, 1991.
8. See Amalendu Guha, "Archaeology of North-East India", in J.P. Singh and Gautam Sengupta, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1-2.
9. Jatin Hazarika's preface in *Political History of Assam*, Volume III, Gauhati, 1980, p. I.
10. Coming out in reprint one year before the start of this study, K.N. Dutta's, *Landmarks in the Freedom Struggle in Assam* (Gauhati, 1969), is a seminal record on the subject.
11. *Prologue*, p. xi.
12. Other titles on the subject are Sekhar Gupta, *Assam A Valley Divided* (New Delhi, 1984); Rekha Bakshi, *Taming the Tempest: Assam Since 1983* (New Delhi, 1985); Susanth K. Das, *Spotlight on Assam* (Chanderpur, 1989), and Prafulla Kr. Mahanta, *The Tussle Between the Citizens and Foreigners of Assam* (New Delhi, 1986).

CHAPTER IV

THE HILL STATES PERIPHERY AND ASSAM

Writing a chapter on the developments of history writing on Assam and its relation with some of the neighbouring hills was possible for obvious reasons. Assam has a much longer tradition of historical inquiry, and its history is more closely connected with that of the Indian people for geographical reasons, than that of the people of its hill fringe, whose histories are to be taken up presently. With the shift of British administration from Bengal to Assam the Assam valleys became the focal point in what may be called the 'Assam centric' approach in history writing. This trend had started with the first of the histories mentioned in chapter II and further indicated in the earlier chapter. The hill periphery inclusive of present day Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura, Manipur and Meghalaya were not totally ignored nor were they given the attention they were due. The 'centre' has since spread from Assam to an examination of the histories of these states severally. From this another trend is in vogue — histories are leading towards an understanding of the history of the north-east, with which we will be concluding this chapter.

Arunachal Pradesh

We start this chapter with Arunachal Pradesh which historically and administratively had little links with Assam

and the Indian state till recent times. From this new Indian state we will make a circle of the other hill states around and encircling Assam. I have preferred to study the status of historical research statewise rather than thematic as most of the recent studies tend to be limited to peoples inhabiting a particular state or to historical and other developments within state boundaries. This trend is not encouraging and very limiting — but the emerging picture when put together presents a focus on the region through micro level studies.

The late J.N. Choudhury has given yeoman's service to Arunachal Pradesh, first as an administrator in the former North East Frontier Agency during which he acquainted himself sufficiently to write three books on the state and its people. *Arunachal Panoramá* (Shillong 1973) was published soon after Arunachal Pradesh became a Union Territory. It gives a comprehensive reading of Arunachal. More detail was added to this book when published as *Arunachal Through the Ages* (Shillong, 1982). Apart from the details that have gone into this publication, its lucid language; its updating of developments and illustrations have made it the best reading on the land and its people. The third book followed shortly *Arunachal Pradesh from Frontier Tract to Union Territory* (New Delhi, 1983), is a detailed account of the administration of the territory initially under British political control and becoming more established after Independence under the NEFA administration before Union Territory status was given in 1972.

Another former administrator of NEFA and a man responsible for a more marked administrative system in the hills of present Arunachal Pradesh, P.N. Luthra has a book on NEFA. *Constitutional and Administrative Growth of North East Frontier Agency* (Shillong 1971), published by the NEFA administration is a small book containing a preface, introduction which gives the historical sequence of developments followed by the many useful Regulations and Act relating to NEFA as appendices. Coming out in print at a time of state and administrative reorganization in the north-east the book became a useful reading towards an understanding of this frontier area.

Much more of history is captured in L.N. Chakravarty's *Glimpses of the Early History of Arunachal* (Shillong, 1973). Yet another administrator of NEFA who gave many years of service to this administration, Chakravarty's text covers the history of the frontier divisions, the historical ruins — particularly Malinithan which he helped discover and write about *Posa* and the Arunachali raids on the plains of Assam. That three bureaucrats have given a lead in tracing the history of Arunachal indicate the interest the NEFA/ Arunachal Pradesh Government has taken in tracing its roots and the history of the many tribes under its administration. All three had long years of service in NEFA/ Arunachal Pradesh making their contributions in books authoritative references.

British Policy in North East Frontier Agency (New Delhi, 1979) authored and edited by M.L. Bose largely relates to NEFA under the political control of the British. It highlights the problem of the frontier — the McMohan Line. The book is made up of a large number of appendices referred in the text, such as the Inner Line Regulation, Scheduled Districts Act, 1874; Assam Frontier Tracts Regulation 1880, and Rules for Administration of Justice in the Dibrugarh Frontier Tract — in the early phase of loose British political control over the Arunachalis.

Though not entirely a work on history, Chandrika Singh's *Emergence of Arunachal Pradesh as a State* (Delhi, 1989) traces the history of Arunachal Pradesh from early British relations with the tribes; British adjustments in this frontier; the emergence of NEFA after 1952 through its developments into the status as a full fledged state in the Indian Union. Something of the history of the State is also covered in Chander S. Panchani in *Arunachal Pradesh Religion, Culture and Society* (Delhi, 1989). Sipra Sen's *Arunachal Pradesh and the Tribes: Select Bibliography* (New Delhi, 1986) after a brief introduction, lists books, journals and articles on Arunachal Pradesh.

Since so little has been written on Arunachal Pradesh it has become a new area of research for social scientists. With the establishment of Arunachal University (1983) much more is expected on the history of the place. Before

this development in University and Collegiate education, research on the history of Arunachal Pradesh had been conducted at Dibrugarh, Gauhati and the North Eastern Hill University, to research some of which have been published after 1990.¹

Nagaland

Till date there is only two books which give a comprehensive history of Nagaland. M. Alemchiba's *A Brief Historical Account of Nagaland*, published by the Naga Institute of Culture (Kohima, 1970), gives an account of the Naga people, their ethnological affinities and their history. It makes mention of Naga origin and migration, their relations with Ahoms, the British and administration under British rule. The closing chapters refer to the outbreak of hostilities in Nagaland and the establishment of the state of Nagaland. Some appendices are incorporated. That a book should come out soon after statehood speaks of a desire of the Government which sponsored the research and publication to have a first hand account of the history of the state and people written by a Naga.

B.B. Gupta had served some years as college teacher, principal and editor *Nagaland District Gazetteers* — experience which acquainted him fairly well to write *History of Nagaland* (New Delhi, 1982). Gupta goes back to the sources for the study of the history of the Nagas their ancient medieval, modern² and cultural history. A brief historical account of the Naga is provided in H. Bareh (ed.) *Gazetteer of India: Nagaland, Kohima District* (Kohima, 1970). Where Alemchiba and Gupta do not go into details and illustrations Julian Jacob, *et al.* have. Their research project on the history and anthropology of the Nagas, *The Nagas: Hill People of the North East: Society Culture and the Colonial Encounter* (London, 1990) is a carefully put together exercise of five years' work. Important chapters of this pioneering combination of history and anthropology are the Naga morung, environment and economy, technology, social organization, chiefs and democracy, feasts of merit, the ritual world, ornaments, futility, war and feuds, Naga national-

ism and Nagaland today. The text is wonderfully illustrated by photographs from the collection of J.P. Mills, J.H. Hutton, Charles Pawsey, R.G. Woodthorpe, Ursula Bower and G.W. Archer. It will be some time before any other work will come close to what this book has done.

Some years earlier Prakash Singh authored *Nagaland: The Land and People*. Published by the National Book Trust (New Delhi, 1972) it starts with "Nagas Down the History"! (exclamation mine). The author was then a senior Officer of the Indian Police Service in Nagaland. His position is clearly reflected in the position he takes in the chapters "Political State", "Quest for Peace", "Suspension of Operations", "Agreement" and "Peace Missions". A useful book on a contemporary issue, like many others on Nagaland is written too close to the historical developments for the author to be objective. Another book that centres in the troubled 1950s-1960s is Y.D. Gundevia's *War and Peace in Nagaland* (New Delhi, 1968). As Foreign Secretary responsible for Nagaland affairs the author was leader of the Government of India's delegation that held a series of talks with the underground Nagas and negotiated a cease fire in September 1984. The book gives details leading to the Naga insurgency³ and peace. Another account of this transitory phase of Naga history is written by Nirmal Nibedon, *Nagaland The Night of the Guerrillas* (New Delhi, 1978).

The interpretation of events in the case of the Naga struggle have been varied. Official view it one way, activists taking up the cause of the Nagas as L. Luithui and Nandita Haksar see it differently. They have a "Collection of documents relating to various Naga underground groups, agreements signed between the Government of India and Naga groups and reports of violation of human rights of the Nagas" (1984), that shows a concern for the disturbed condition in Nagaland and its effects on the Nagas. An academic touch to the history and political events of this period is provided in M. Horam's *Naga Insurgency: The Last Thirty Years* (New Delhi, 1988). As the title indicates, it is a record of the building up of the activity and impact of Naga insurgency.

We have noted Chandrika Singh's book on Arunachal Pradesh. Earlier to that book the author published *Political Evolution of Nagaland* (New Delhi, 1981). Submitted as a Ph.D. thesis to Magadh University the scholar has taken the developments in Nagaland to 1980. If we have mentioned works by political scientists it would only be fair to make mention of books by politicians. One such is *Emergence of Nagaland* (New Delhi, 1986) by Hokishe Sema, former Chief Minister of Nagaland. He traces the history to the origin, Nagas and the British their social and religious life, the emergence of Nagaland, the boundary dispute with Assam, Naga sub-nationalism, democracy and developments in Nagaland. A number of appendices support the text. Another of M. Horam's works sees the Nagas in transition in *Nagas Old Ways New Trends* (New Delhi, 1988).

Another Naga who has contributed immensely to an understanding of Naga history is Asoso Yonou. An officer of the Government of India, Yonou has two well written books, *The Rising Nagas: A Historical and Political Study* (Delhi, 1974) is essentially a modern history of the Naga people and their adjustments first under British rule into India independence and the Naga struggle for their identity and political status. His second book is more specific and limited in time. *Naga Resistance Against British Rule Under Jadanang and Rani Gaidinliu 1925-1947* (Kohima, 1982), as the title suggests, highlights the effort of two Nagas against British expansion and control over their hills. We may close this section by referring to Sipra Sen's *Tribes of Nagaland* (New Delhi, 1987) which is as complete a collection of bibliographical references on the Nagas as there can be.

Manipur

Whereas Nagaland is composed of kindred Naga tribes, neighbouring Manipur is composed of myriad of tribes and communities. Its historical roots can also be traced back to dates earlier than that of Naga history. Whereas the Nagas have written largely in the English medium, Manipur

scholars have been able to use their own languages and vernaculars for presentation of their history.⁴ With four early histories in the period before 1970 not much effort was made to elaborate, update and give fresh interpretation to the histories till W. Ibohal Singh's *History of Manipur* (Imphal, 1986). Manipur historians have therefore concentrated on more specific themes. M.K. Singh has a book *Religious Developments in Manipur in the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Imphal, 1980). Chander S. Panchani has covered a vast experience of history and culture in *Manipur Religion, Culture and Society* (New Delhi, 1987). A much more extensive cover of history and culture is available in Naorem Sanajaoba's edited *Manipur Past and Present* (New Delhi, 1988). This is a compendium of articles covering history in Part I, polity (Part II), land (Part III), treaties (Part IV) and documents as appendices. Bimal J. Deb and Dilip Lahiri have jointly authored *Manipur Culture and Politics* (N. Delhi, 1987). The writing on culture however is downplayed with emphasis on anti-British rebellions and their impact; Manipur palace politics and administration; the hill tribes of Manipur and the former 'native' state's accession into the Indian Federation.

Manipuris are fiercely concerned about the British expedition into Imphal in 1891 and the arrangement and hanging of Tikendrajit.⁵ N. Khel Chandra Singh has compiled documents relating to the event in *Documents of Anglo-Manipur War 1891* (Imphal, 1984). He has also gone into the details of the *Battle of Khongjom* (Imphal, 1983). Gangmumei Kemai (Kabui) had many years earlier published a small piece *Anglo-Manipur War 1891* (Imphal, 1972).

Studies on smaller tribes have been done by M. Horam, *Social and Cultural Life of Nagas: The Tangkhuls* (Delhi, 1977); G. Kabui, *Anal: A Transborder Tribe of Manipur* (Delhi, 1985) and K.V.L. Roland, *Tangkhul Naga History* (Imphal, 1976). Roland has also put together *A Comparative History of the Nagas from Ancient Period Till 1826* (Delhi, 1988). It is of interest to note the work being done by Nagas of Manipur covering the Naga tribes in both Nagaland and Manipur. One other study on the Nagas needs mention. R.R. Shimray has given a look into Naga folklore in interpreting the

Origin and Culture of the Nagas (revised, New Delhi, 1986). Reprints of monographs by T.C. Hudson, *The Naga Tribes of Manipur* (Delhi, 1974), and T.C. Hudson, *The Meitais* (Delhi, 1975) has been welcomed by researchers. Gangmumei Kabui has taken note of the interest in their history by Manipuri scholars, particularly he mentions that in the 1970s and the next quarter century "studies on history took a scientific form".⁶

Mizoram

Were it not for the concern shown by Dr. N. Chatterjee, Senior Research Officer at the Tribal Research Institute to reprint out of print monographs and reports, research into Mizoram's history would have been difficult. Some of the more useful reprints are Thomas H. Lewin's biography *A Fly in the Wheel or How I Helped to Govern India* (Aizawl, 1977); R.G. Woodthorpe, *The Lushai Expedition 1871-1872* (Aizawl, 1978); L.W. Shakespear, *History of the Assam Rifles* (Aizawl, 1977); F.K. Lehman, *The Structure of Chin Society* (Aizawl, 1980). Among the monographs the Tribal Research Institute has reprinted are N.E. Parry's, *The Lakhers* (Aizawl, 1976) and A.G. McCall's *Lushai Chrysallis* (Aizawl, 1977) and C.A. Soppitt's *A Short Account of the Kuki-Lushai Tribes* (Aizawl, 1976).

Two explanations come to mind immediately why not much has been written in the English language on Mizo history. In the first place, the Mizos have developed their language to such an extent that many Mizo authors are more comfortable writing in Mizo than in English. As with the Meitais, there are a significant number of books on the history of Mizoram in Mizo. This needs to be mentioned because as shall follow there are few texts in English and the impression just could be wrongly gathered that the Mizos have no interest in their past. Secondly, the Mizo identity over a land and its people was a much later development than the case among some other tribal groups in North East India. One might add a third explanation why there has not been much of historical writing on Mizoram. The state's emergence is very recent and its government,

teachers and researchers have not as yet come to realise the importance of writing a history from its earliest recorded times to the present.

Lal Biak Thanga's *The Mizos* (Gauhati, 1978) will go down as among the first of books giving a history of the Mizos, their history and culture. A fairly impressive part of the book gives the early history, advent of the British and the years after Independence. Developing on this start V.L. Siama wrote *Mizo History* (Aizawl, 1978). Another authority on Mizo history particularly under the British and their incorporation into the British India administration, Suhas Chatterjee did a pioneering doctoral research in Gauhati University, on the English and the Lushais. Published as *Mizoram Under British Rule* (New Delhi, 1985), the study covers the history of the different Mizo clans living in the hills after their name, before and after they came into contact with English. The book has six chapters covering the early phase, conciliation, forward policy, annexation, consolidation, the problem of the Chins and the Lushais (as they were then called), and the English.

The Mizos of the Chin group are spread over North East India and Burma. An interesting study of the Chins in Burma has been referred to in F.K. Lehman's anthropological inquiry of a tribal people in Burma adapted to a "non-western civilization". First hand information of a section of the tribe across the watershed is provided in B. Lalthangliana's *History of Mizo in Burma* (Aizawl, 1980). Vumsom's *Zo History* (Aizawl, n.d.) attempts to broaden and integrate the various clans and tribes of the Zo people into a common and shared past. Vumsom introduces the Zo people with a study of the generic name "Zo". Other chapters study their culture and custom, tribal developments, British influence, Japan *Ral* (the Japanese War 1942-1944), Zo people in Burma, Zo people in India and Zo people in Bangladesh. He provides a detailed bibliography. V. Venkata Rao *et al.* in *A Century of Government and Politics in North-East India*, Vol. III, Mizoram (New Delhi, 1987) provides much history in a study of Government and politics in the state.

J.D. Baveja provides a useful reference to Mizo history in *The Land Where The Bamboo Flowers* (Gauhati, 1970). The only detailed political history of Mizoram is Chaltualkhuma's *Political History of Mizoram* (Aizawl, 1981). Smaller studies on the region as whole will be noted in another section. During the year covered by the review Mizoram's insurgency had already started, raged and an accord was signed. Though many writers would take this as their study after 1990, only B.B. Goswami's work may be mentioned here. *Mizo Unrest* (Jaipur, 1979) was the first detailed study of the subject. Animesh Ray has a more broad view of Mizoram in *Dynamics of Change* (Calcutta, 1982).

Tripura

Tripura's first historian was a Christian missionary. It's not known how E.F. Sandys, a Presbyterian missionary who worked many years in the Lushai Hills (present Mizoram) got interested in Tripura. *His History of Tripura* published by the Tripura State Government (Agartala, 1915) was compiled from the then existing sources and state records. Much of the information herein was later used in a fairly long chapter "The Hill Tiperra State", in Somerset Playne's (compiled) *Bengal and Assam, Bihar and Orissa: Their History, People, Commerce and Industry* (1917). Many histories in Bengali followed.

Histories of Tripura covered in this survey are in significant number. It speaks of the interest the people have in the history and the effort the state administration has taken in encouraging research, writing and publication of histories and other related matter. We may first note the book *Tripura* by S.N. Guha Thakurtha published by the National Book Trust (1986). It provides an overview of the state and its people. Jagadish Gan-Choudhury's edited book, *Tripura The Land and Its People* (Delhi, 1980) has two chapters on its history written by Nalini Ranjan Choudhuri "The Historical Past" and Bani Kantha Bhattacharjee, "Pattern of Administrative Organization". Omesh Saigal has authored *Tripura: Its History and Culture* (N. Delhi, 1978) in

which the history section had to be adjusted into the more detailed discussion of the culture in Tripura.

The smallest of the histories is J.C. Dutt's *An Introduction to the History of Tripura from Monarchy to Democracy* (Calcutta, 1984). Intended to introduce readers to Tripura's history, Dutta's work is nonetheless a fine attempt to survey the past. A more detailed and well researched publication is Nalini Ranjan Roy Choudhury's *Tripura Through the Ages: A Short History of Tripura From the Earliest Times to 1947 A.D.* (New Delhi, 1983). It incorporates in this popular paperback edition the ancient, medieval, modern history; the growth of political consciousness, the administration; the socio-economic conditions, coins and inscriptions of the medieval period and concludes with the historical literature on Tripura.

British relation with the State of Tripura by H.K. Sur (Agartala, 1986), goes into more details of British political relation with the Tripura 'native' state. Banikanta Bhattacharjee has put his researches together in *Tripura Administration: The Era of Modernisation* (Delhi, 1986). The study covers Tripura's administration from ancient times till the 7th decade of the 19th century. Two writers have made their mark in political history. J. Gan Choudhury's *A Political History of Tripura* (New Delhi, 1985) was followed the next year by R.M. Sharma's *Political History of Tripura* (Agartala, 1986). Both cover the same things in history with an emphasis in Manikya era politics and British paramountcy.

With its large tribal setting Tripura has focused on the history and culture of its composite tribes. Sudhanshu Bikash Shah on *Tribes of Tripura: A Historical Survey* (Agartala, 1986) attempted a study of the tribes in an historical setting. The Department of Welfare for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, Government of Tripura has published studies on individual tribes. Some studies by P.N. Bhattacharjee are *The Kolois in the Light of People's History* (Agartala, 1983); *The Jamatias of Tripura* (Agartala, 1984); *The Garos of Tripura* (Agartala, 1987). J. Gan Choudhury has a study on the *Riangs of Tripura* (Agartala, 1983). *The Kukis of Tripura* (Agartala, 1976) is a study conducted by R.G. Singh, *Tripura District Gazetteer* (Agartala, 1975) has useful historical references.

Meghalaya

Like Mizoram, Meghalaya has histories on different subjects but has no history of the state as a whole. A project was designed by the State Council of Educational Research and Training to write and publish the history of Meghalaya. Discussions were held at a seminar many years ago, papers were written on various topics; sadly these have remained un-edited and not published. Apparently the Government of Meghalaya has no will to encourage the writing of the history of the people of the state. Other states have done well in this regard. Meghalaya lags behind.

During the period under review 1970–1990, much attention has been drawn by scholars to the history of the Khasi, Jaintia and Garos. One reason could have been the encouragement given by Gauhati University in this regard. Scholars chose topics relating to the tribes perhaps due to the fact that there was so much more primary material on these than on other tribes. Familiarity with sources has resulted in a fairly well covered history of British rule and paramountcy over the Garo, Jaintia and the Khasi. Historians and social scientists have also gone beyond archival material to trace back the histories of these hill people. Take for instance, Namita C. Sen Shadap's *The Origin and Early History of the Khasi-Synteng People* (Calcutta, 1981). Based on her doctoral dissertation submitted to the University of London, Namita Shadap's study made pioneering contribution to the early history of the tribes, particularly with her use of oral traditions. Soumen Sen's *Social and State Formation in Khasi Jaintia Hills* (N. Delhi, 1985), has attempted to study the history and culture, social and political institutions of the Khasi-Jaintias by analyzing their myths, legends, ritual, folktales and folksongs.

Three important studies cover British run over the Garos. P.C. Kar, with his long experience of teaching in a Tura college, published *British Annexation of Garo Hills* (Calcutta, 1970). This provides an outline account of British annexation of the Garo Hills, and the pattern of administration. The book also provides a comparative sociological account of the different tribes living in the Garo

Hills. Appendices which form practically half the book were useful for researchers. Much more detail was provided in J.B. Bhattacharjee's *The Garos and the English 1765-1874* (New Delhi, 1978). This is a critical account of the relations of the British Government with the Garos, beginning with their first interest with the tribe shortly after the grant of the Diwani of Bengal to the beginning of the Assam Chief Commissionership. Chapters give details of pre-British relations; early contact, changing British policy; the genesis of the Non-Regulation System of administration (that was first applied to the Garos and later extended to the other hill tribes); administrative developments and material and moral progress concludes with the impact of British rule on the Garos. More comprehensive in time, though not in detail in Milton Sangma's *History and Culture of the Garos* (New Delhi, 1981). The chapter on historical background, is the base for the chapters that follow in the village council, political system, administrative of justice, revenue administration, social life, customary laws and religion.

Studies in British relations with the Khasi-Jaintias was a trend in historical studies. P.N. Dutta published his Gauhati University dissertation entitled *Impact of the West on the Khasis-Jaintias: A Survey of Political Economic and Social Change* (Delhi, 1982). He surveys British political developments in India since 1774 and examines its impact on the role of the Khasi-Jaintia Chiefs, economic and material progress, society in transition, education and the emerging society. D.R. Syiemlieh had highlighted British administrative policy and pattern over the Garos, Khasi and Jaintias in *British Administration in Meghalaya: Policy and Pattern* (New Delhi, 1989). Covering a longer span in history his study beginning around 1765 takes the developments to shortly after Independence. Details are provided on the non-regulation system indirect administration, revenue pattern, resistance movements and relations with the traditional chiefs. Helen Giri's study *The Khasis Under British Rule 1824-1947* (Shillong, 1990) covers a shorter span in the history but with sufficient detail on early Khasi contact with the British, ascendancy of British rule; Khasi

challenge under Bor Manik and Tirot Singh, the Cherra Political Agency, paramountcy, political developments and the interesting story of the integration of the Khasi states into the Indian Union (1947-1949).

Elements of Garo history by N.N. Acharyya, "A cursory Glance on the History of Garo Hills"; M.S. Sangma "History and Culture of the Garos"; and J.B. Bhattacharjee have been incorporated in LS. Gassah (ed.) *Garo Hills Land and the People* (Gauhati, 1984). Published by the North-East India Council for Social Science Research the book is a fitting dedication to the work of P.C. Kar, historian and one of the first members of the NEICSSR.⁷ Another NEICSSR publication B. Pakem (ed.) *Shillong 1971-81* (Calcutta, 1984) has articles that trace the historical growth of Shillong from a hamlet, to a station, then a town and presently a city.

Mention has been made of V. Venkata Rao's multi volume *A Century of Government and Politics in North East India* in Assam and Mizoram. The second volume *Meghalaya* (New Delhi, 1984) covers the period 1874-1983. Even if some historians and political scientists find the late V.V. Rao's works and style outdated and archaic there is no denying the fact that he has made his mark in his studies on the government and politics of North East India. The volume referred to above has a fairly detailed profile of Meghalaya and a chapter on British paramountcy. The chapters on the formation of Meghalaya and regional political parties have much historical information which can be of use to students of history.

Some other useful texts on specific themes are listed below; one is Milton S. Sangma's *History of Education in Garo Hills* (Guwahati, 1985). This study is the outcome of extensive study made from Government and Christian Mission archives. After having carefully surveyed the foundations and growth of various educational institutions in the Garo Hills, it makes an assessment of the forces at work that have contributed to the making of the present day educational situation. Julius L.R. Marak's *Garo Customary Laws and Practices: A Sociological Study* (Shillong, 1985) has a chapter "Historical Background" before the main body

of the book. Other chapters relate to Garo customary laws. H.L. Deb Roy's *A Tribe in Transition: The Jaintias of Meghalaya* (New Delhi, 1981) has attempted an exclusive study in the changes that have come to and affect Jaintia life.

Overview

The impression just may be gathered that histories of north-east India have been written largely on a community or state perspective. While this trend is strong some very important publications have cut across narrow boundaries to view the history of the region as a whole. In this regard H.K. Barpujari's three volume *Problem of the Hill Tribes North-East Frontier* set the pace. A critical and comprehensive study of the problems and policies of the British and Indian governments towards the hill tribes on the then north-eastern frontier of India, the volumes were based on extensive archival references that the author tapped in India and the United Kingdom. Not unlike the methodology used in his *Assam in the days of the Company*, the three volumes provided an interpretation of how the hill tribes came into relations, were incorporated or had political control over them by the British. Volume I (Gauhati, 1970), covers the period 1822-1842 in which sections on the Nagas, Khasis, Garos explain the early phase of British connection. Volume II (Gauhati, 1970), takes the history from 1843 to 1872 in what may be termed the secondary phase of British relationship with the tribes. The third volume (Gauhati, 1981), (interestingly each volume is almost of the same size) take the history from 1873 with the Inner Line to 1962 when the Indian Government had to face the problem of China exerting its claim over areas not clearly demarcated by the McMohan Line.

Another commendable effort of the Assam Government is the three volume *Political History of Assam*. The decision to publish a comprehensive political history of composite Assam was taken at a meeting of the Committee to celebrate the birth centenary of two of Assam's many freedom fighters — Nabin Chandra Bardoloi and Tarun Ram Phookan. The Assam Government was requested to

compile the history. A team of historians got working and before long with H.K. Barpujari's meticulous care Volume I was published (Gauhati, 1977). This volume briefly is an account of the arrival and consolidation of British paramountcy over Assam with the diffused reaction against it. The second volume (Gauhati, 1978) had a change in editors. Arun Ch. Bhuyan and Sibapada De continued the project - there is a visible shift in the focus and presentation of the developments. While the first volume covered the time span 1826-1919, the second volume covered in more detail the political history between 1920-1939. Its seven chapters give a searching account of the freedom struggle in Assam and the socio-economic and political changes that came with the gradual weakening of British control. The same two editors completed the project with the publication of the third volume (Gauhati, 1980). This study covers the developments between 1940-1947 with important chapters on the mass character of the movement, the role Assam played in the Quit India Movement, the Leftist role, that of the regional parties, the Cabinet Mission Plan - the closing pages of the last chapter is somewhat of a let-down as the expectations, anxiety, euphoria of different sections of society just before and shortly after 15 August 1947 is missing. Each volume have appendices and bibliography.

Into this category of books we may include V.V. Rao's *A Century of Tribal Politics in North East India 1874-1974* (New Delhi, 1976). Dedicated to Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, President of India, much of the material used in writing of the book came from archives in New Delhi, Gauhati and district headquarters in the region; and from private papers. Unfortunately the author does not indicate their use in footnotes and references. Though principally a work on Government and politics in north-east India the historical insights and references are many and useful. Though the chapter on the state formation on Meghalaya is detailed, the book gives little importance to Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland which are covered briefly, and to Tripura and Manipur which the author hoped to incorporate in a latter edition.

Much more slender in size but far more analytical and interesting to read is S. Chaube's *Hill Politics in North East India* (Calcutta, 1973). It appeared just after the reorganisation of the states, just after the hill state movements and when some parts of the hills were raging in discontent to other hills in incipient insurgency. With a rare quality of covering the political events in the entire hill area of the region without missing the more significant developments Chaube has provided a fusion of using history to explain *that present*.

In closing this chapter it would be fitting to refer to Nari Rustomji's second book.⁸ *Imperilled Frontier: India's North East Borderland* (Delhi, 1983) was written after Rustomji retired from the I.C.S. and after three decades and more of a passionate connection with North East India. He analyses in this very delightful book the factors underlying the growing unrest, he demonstrates that people however primitive resent the imposition of an alien culture. Rustomji's central message is that while change is imperative for a community's healthy development, the pace of change must be adjusted to the community's capacity to absorb it without detriment to essential values.

REFERENCES

1. See for example, Tai Nyori's *History and Culture of The Adis* (New Delhi, 1973) and T. Mibang *Social Change in Arunachal Pradesh: The Minyongs (1947-1981)*, (New Delhi, 1994) thesis' submitted to Gauhati University; N.N. Osik, *A Brief History of Arunachal Pradesh*, (New Delhi, 1996), Dibrugarh University thesis and Sudatta Sikdar, *The Eastern Himalayan Trade of Assam in the 19th Century: A Study of the British Policy*, NEHU, Ph.D., 1983.
2. The author could have been more careful in the periodization of the history of the Nagas. As Amalendu Guha points out, "In the case of most parts of North east India, periodization breaks down since major segments of our population have lived down to early 19th century without mastering the art of writing. If we want to know about their pre-19th century past then the conventional methods of history writing do not help. See J. P. Singh and Gautam Sengupta (ed.) *Archaeology of North-Eastern India*, New Delhi, 1971, p. 2.

3. The terms "underground", "insurgency" have been used as written in this and other accounts and does not indicate the view of the present writer.
4. See for instance, Leisangthem Chandramani Singh, *Manipur Itihas* (Imphal, 1970) which covers the history of Manipur between 1874-1891. Three other histories in English, J. Roy, *History of Manipur* (Calcutta, 1958), L. Ibungohal Singh, *Introduction to Manipur* (Imphal, 1963), and R.K. Jhalajit Singh, *A Short History of Manipur* (Imphal, 1965) continued the researches first made by Abdul Ali, *Notes on Early History of Manipur* (1923).
5. John and Saroj Parratt's *Queen Empress Vs Tikindrajit Prince of Manipur: The Anglo-Manipur Conflict of 1891*, (New Delhi, 1992) has unfolded the events leading to the conflict in an unusual but interesting manner.
6. Keynote Address, "Objectivity on the Historiography of Manipur", *Proceedings of the Second Session of Manipur Historical Society*, 1995, Vol. No. 1, Imphal, 1996, p. 8.
7. More elaborate notice will be made of the contribution of the NEICSSR, to the history of North East India in a later chapter.
8. *Enchanted Frontiers*, New Delhi, 1973, is a biographical account of his association with the region.

CHAPTER V

SELECT THEMES, JOURNALS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Having made a general survey of the historical literature on Assam and the six other states that collectively constitute North East India, this chapter will report on academic associations and certain select themes in journals. While these themes all relate to the region they are either micro-studies or more broad presentations within their specific focus. Historical research in the region for various reasons as has been explained, has developed so significantly that historians have taken up research into newer areas of inquiry following the trends set elsewhere. Some of the themes that have become established or work on which has just started are historiography, state formation, social and class formation, nationalism and sub-nationalism, ethnicity, and Christianity among many more interesting aspects of the history of the region.

Historiography

We have noted some of the early studies on historiography. With so much written on its history it was expected and desirable that the historiography of North East India would be taken up before long. The gap in time between the review of Gait's *History of Assam* and the years covered by this survey in which the concern on historiographical issues have arisen has been long but made up by histori-

ans of the region reviewing the developments on the subject. Before the studies between 1970-1990 are taken up it would be of interest to scholars to refer to S.K. Bhuyan's *From a Historian's Haversack: London Memories* (Gauhati, 1979). It is not only a memoir of one of Assam's more prominent historians in it one will gather the influences that moulded Bhuyan's approach and writing of history. Another of Bhuyan's publications, *Studies in the History of Assam* which is a collection of various essays on the subject, was first published in 1965. A reprint edition was brought out subsequently (New Delhi, 1985).

With the establishment of the North East India History Association in April 1979 and from its first annual conference in 1980, the NEIHA Presidents have had a platform to express their views of history as an academic subject and research and writings on North East India in particular. We have in an earlier chapter taken note of the views of some of the Presidential addresses. They have largely focused on the urgency that historical research on North East India should not be insular but that it is desirable to have these linked with the histories of India in general. S.K. Barpujari set the tone of NEIHA in his first Presidential address (Shillong 1980). Amalendu Guha presented a critique of the traditional scheme of periodization of history in the context of the region at the Second Session (Dibrugarh, 1980). In the third session, D.P. Borooah deliberated upon the philosophy of history (Imphal, 1982). S.K. Barpujari in his Presidential address to the fourth session (Barapani, 1983), surveyed the source materials and reiterated the importance of institutional support for research work. Sanat Bose was President for the fifth session. He took up the discussion on the growth of institutional labour in general and the Assam tea plantation labour in particular (Aizawl, 1984). H.L. Gupta's address at the sixth session (Agartala, 1985), provided an overview of the writing on the history of the region and reaffirmed the relevance of regional history to Indian historiography. Emerging issues of historical research were gone into by J.B. Ganguly in the seventh session (Pasighat, 1986) and Gangmumei Kabui in the eighth session (Kohima, 1989). The ninth

session was presided by B. Qanungo who raised a set of philosophical issues involved in the concept and methods of historical analysis (Guwahati, 1988).¹ The tenth session was held in Shillong in 1989 and presided by J.N. Phukan. He stressed on the medieval history of Assam, emphasising on the Ahoms and their place in the history of Assam. Tarasankar Banerjee's Presidential address in the eleventh session (Imphal, 1990) was special in the sense that he took an objective view of the historical developments in the region and made a comparative study of NEIHA and the South India History Congress.

That the NEIHA members have a concern for the historiography of the region in general and their own areas of research in particular is reflected in a number of papers being presented on historiography in its annual conferences. These eleven conference proceedings invariably have articles on historiography forming the first part of the publication. As there are too many papers it will not be feasible to discuss each contribution. Some significant contributions are those by G.P. Singh on the history of ancient Tripura (Shillong, 1980); J.N. Phukan on the nature of Ahom Buranjis (Dibrugarh, 1981); J.B. Bhattacharjee on the Mutiny in Cachar (1857) (Barapani, 1983); and on the Bhatara Copper-plate (Aizawl, 1984); N.N. Acharya on the source material for the history of Manipur and Gangmumei Kabui's brief note on Loiyamba Shinyen (Imphal, 1982); and another article by G.P. Singh on the historiography of pre-historic megalithic cultures in North East India (Agartala, 1985). The Seventh Session at Pasighat 1980 had a record six papers on different historiographical issues by O.P. Kejariwal, Jai Prakash Singh, J.B. Bhattacharjee, D.R. Syiemlieh, M. Jitendra Singh and L.B. Verma. In the next session (Kohima, 1987), nine papers were read on historiography by O.P. Kejariwal, S. Sarma, S.K. Bose, J.N. Phukan, K.C. Deka, G. Adhikary, Jai Prakash Singh, Soumen Sen and Frederick S. Downs. The Guwahati Session 1988 had papers by Bharati Barua, Gangmumei Kabui, N. Lokendra Singh, Nityananda Gogoi, Gautam Sengupta, Jai Prakash Singh on different aspects of historiography. At the decennial meet of the Association (1989) papers on historiography were

presented by Pratap C. Dutta, T.C. Sharma, Gautam Sengupta and S. Chakraborty, N.N. Acharyya, S.K. Bose, Jai Prakash Singh and G.P. Singh which quite unlike earlier papers were largely on archaeology, numismatics and ancient history. The trend in historiography continued in the eleventh session (Imphal, 1990) with fourteen papers on this theme by Cecile Mawlong, L. Kunjeswori, S.K. Bose, H.B. Devi, T. Tomba Singh, Tamo Mibang, Jai Prakash Singh, J.B. Bhattacharjee, F.A. Qadri, Soumen Sen, N. Lokendra Singh and L.B. Verma, Gautam Sengupta and N.N. Acharyya.² Another NEIHA publication, *Studies in the History of North East India* (Shillong, 1986) has two important papers in historiography by Birendranath Dutta on the historical content of Assam folk songs and S.L. Baruah on historiography of medieval Assam. To sum up – NEIHA's contribution to the historiography of North East India is immense and continues to be a central theme of research for members.³

That NEIHA has done much for the historiography of the region there is no doubt. NEIHA is today in its bi-decennial year. As members meet this November in Dibrugarh University the tradition built up over the past 20 years presenting the history of the region will go down in the annals of time as among the most successful of academic associations.

The proceedings of a seminar on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Institute of Historical Studies held at Santiniketan in October 1986 has been published by Tarasankar Banerjee (ed.), *Indian Historical Resource Since Independence* (Calcutta, 1986). The first article therein is a study by Manorama Sharma and J.B. Bhattacharjee, "Historical Research in North-East India: Trends and Directions."⁴ It briefly traces the trends in historical studies in the region before 1947, takes the development in the post-independence phase and mentions the names of historians who have contributed to the history of the region. They notice a trend of continued liberal/empirical tradition in history and the beginnings made by historians from the historical materialist point of view.

State Formation

In recent years much progress has been made in the study of state formation. The earlier writings on state formation were largely empirical in nature. The trend since the 70's has been analytical. Studies in state formation has not been the preserve of historians. Among the social scientists who have worked on this theme, special note will be made of the studies by J.B. Bhattacharjee, B. Pakem, Soumen Sen, Amalendu Guha, J.N. Phukan and Ramesh Buragohain.

Amalendu Guha was among the first of historians to study state formation. One of his earliest papers "The Ahom Political System: An Enquiry into the State Formation Process in Medieval Assam 1228-1714," was published in *Social Scientist*, Vol. II, No. 12, December 1983. A lead article of this volume it was not only an historical study of the evolution of the Ahom social-political system — it made a theoretical contribution which discusses a number of issues of Marxist understanding of the subject. In another issue of the same journal (Vol. 12, No. 6, June 1984) Amalendu Guha replies to Nayanjot Lahiri's discussion of his paper. He has titled his reply "Pre-Ahom Roots and the Medieval State in Assam".

Much more prolific in term of publications and geographical cover has been J.B. Bhattacharjee's studies on the subject. After his pioneering works on Cachar and the Garos he turned his attention to state formation. "An Early State in Srihattadesha: Content Analysis of the Bhatara Copper-Plates", *Proceedings of the North East India History Association* (Aizawl, 1984); "Some important sources of the History of Medieval and Modern Cachar", *Shodhak*, Vol. 1, Pt. 1, 1975; "Colonialism and Feudalism: Cachar in the 19th Century", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* (Hyderabad, 1978); "The Economic Content of the Medieval State Formation Process Among the Dimachas of North East India", *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* (Goa, 1987); "Brahmanical Myths, Royal Legitimation and the Jaintia State Formation", *The North Eastern Hill University Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, Vol. VII, No. 1, 1990; "Land Grants, Land Management and the Social Formation in

Srihatta", *The North Eastern Hill University Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, Vol. VI, No. 2, 1988; "State Formation in Pre-Colonial Tribal North East: A Case Study of the Dimasa State", *The North Eastern Hill University Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, Vol. II, No. 3, 1984; "Tripura State Formation in Medieval Tripura", *Proceedings of the North East India History Association* (Imphal, 1982); "The Koch Principality in Cachar: A Study of Medieval Polity Formation in North East India", *Proceedings of the North East India History Association* (Dibrugarh, 1981) and "Social Formation in Pre-Colonial Garo Society: Problems and Processes" in S.K. Chattapadhyay (ed.), *Tribal Institutions of Meghalaya* (Guwahati, 1985) are some of the more important of many papers he has written and published on the state formation in Sylhet, Cachar and among the Jaintia, Garo and Dimasas. With his command of languages and sources J.B. Bhattacharjee has established his niche in this field of historical enquiry. Scattered as these articles are in various publications he has edited and compiled these with a very welcome publication *Social and Polity Formations in Pre-Colonial North East India The Barak Valley Experience* (New Delhi, 1991).

The Jaintia state formation has also been studied by B. Pakem. He wrote a seminal paper "State Formation in Pre-Colonial Jaintia" for the *North Eastern Hill University Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, Vol. II, No. 3, 1984. The experiences of Amalendu Guha (Ahom), J.B. Bhattacharjee (Dimasa), B. Pakem (Jaintia), Hamlet Bareh (Khasi) and S.K. Saha (Manipur) have been incorporated into Surajit Sinha (ed.), *Tribal Politics and State Systems in Pre-Colonial Eastern and North Eastern India* (Calcutta, 1987) which till date is the most authoritative text on the subject.

We may also notice some other writings on state formation. Soumen Sen has used oral tradition and folklore to build up on *Social and State Formation in Khasi Jaintia Hills* (Delhi, 1985). Herein the author has drawn from the rich oral tradition of the Khasi-Jaintias to explain how their *Himas* emerged. We may also refer here to an article of Soumen Sen "State Formation and Folklore in the

Khasi-Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya" published in *North Eastern Quarterly* (Vol. 2, No. 1, July 1984). J.N. Phukan has an article "The Formation and Growth of Tai Mung State", in the *Journal of the North East India Council for Social Science Research*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1983. With his knowledge of the Tai language his is an authoritative article on a hitherto little researched subject. Ramesh Buragohain extensively cover the state formation in "Ahom State Formation in Assam" submitted as a Ph.D. thesis to the North Eastern Hill University in 1987. Over the years he has presented five papers on Ahom and Chutiya state formation at NEIHA Conferences (Aizawl, 1984); (Agartala, 1985); (Pasighat, 1986); (Guwahati, 1988) and (Imphal, 1990).

Agrarian and Middle Class Studies

Two other areas of research that have drawn the attention of scholars are agrarian conditions and the middle class – and as can be seen from the references to be made both these subjects are largely centred on the Brahmaputra valley; to a lesser degree to the Barak valley and to only occasional notices of the hill areas. Among the early researches on land and agrarian questions were two article by Amalendu Guha.⁵ Another very important paper of Amalendu Guha was published in the very first issue of the *Indian Historical Review*, "Tribalism to Feudalism in Assam 1600-1750" (Vol. 1, No. 1, 1974). The opinions expressed by the author stimulated a debate on the question of the agrarian conditions in Assam of which we note that Guha's article published in the *Indian Social and Economic History Review* (1968) prompted Stuart Jones to make a short comment "A Big Push Without A Take Off: A Case Study of Assam 1871-1901" (*IESHR*, Vol. XI, No. 4, December, 1974). Amalendu Guha's reply to the questions asked by the University of Witswaterand teacher is published in the same volume indicated above.

The Indian Social and Economic History Review, Vol. XVI, No. 2, April-June, 1979, added to its coverage of Assam's past with Aditya Mukherjee's article "Agrarian Conditions in Assam 1880-1890: A Case Study of Five Districts of the

Brahmaputra Valley". He discusses the clan composition of rural Assam; the revenue demand, growth of merchant and money lenders, and productivity and supply. Not satisfied with what he had already published, Amalendu Guha wrote a rather lengthy 59 pages article "Assamese Agrarian Society in the Late Nineteenth Century: Roots, Structures and Trends" for the *IESHR*, Vol. XVII, No. 1, January-March 1980. Here the author has gone into some details of each of the following; the genesis and structure of the land revenue system, the Mauzadari system; peasants and planters, forms of property; the big landlords; the small landholders, forms of hired labour, tenancy, social differentiation and closes the discussion with some tentative conclusions. If this extremely well researched paper explains the conditions in Assam, Guha's "Neo-Vaishnavism to Insurgency: A Study of Peasant Uprisings in 18th Century Assam", in Ashok Mitra's (ed.) *Oppression and Resistance: Essays in Honour of Samar Sen* and an Occasional Paper No. 67 on the same subject discussed at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, give another dimension to the study of Assamese agrarian society. S. D. Goswami has an article "Agrarian Politics and Peasant Militancy in Post-Mutiny Assam, in the first issue of *North Eastern Quarterly: A Journal of Social Science Research*,⁶ (Vol. 1, No. 1, 1982). A discussion on this subject followed (in Vol. I, No. 2, November, 1982). One of Sajal Nag's first article was published in the *NEQ*. "Peasant and the Raj: Study of a Subaltern Movement in Assam 1893-1894" (*NEQ*, Vol. 2, No. 1, July, 1989) has two parts; the first a review of the peasant studies in Colonial India, the second discusses the riots in Assam before the turn of the century.

Social scientists have been drawn into the debate of the emergence, role played by, and the ideology of the middle class. The research in this theme has been scattered over a whole array of journals with interpretations ranging from a literal understanding of the term to fitting interpretations within a Marxian framework. Hiren Gohain made an important contribution with "Origins of the Assamese Middle Class", in *Social Scientist* (No. 13, August, 1973). We may note two studies by Amalendu Guha

on the subject. At a seminar on Resource Base and Problems of Regionalism of North Eastern Region in India, held at NEHU in 1977, he read a paper "Making of the Assamese Middle Class". Much of his research into this subject is covered in *Planter Raj to Swaraj*. In B. Datta Ray (ed.) *The Emergence and Role of Middle Class in North East India* (New Delhi, 1983) are 8 articles of which those by M.S. Baruah on the peasant uprising of 1893-1894 and the role played therein by the Assamese middle class; S. Baruah and J.B. Bhattacharjee on the middle class and language politics in Assam during the colonial period; and K. Alam's study on the industrial middle class in Assam are among the significant contributions.

NEIHA has been a platform for discussing issues special to the North East. Manorama Sharma has two papers in *NEIHA Proceedings* covered within the time frame of this review. At the Ninth Session (Guwahati, 1988) she read a paper "The Assam Middle Class and Integration: The Role of the Assam Sahitya Sabha"; and at the Tenth Session (Shillong, 1989) she presented a paper on "Peasant Uprisings and Middle Class Hegemony: The Case of Assam". Visier Sanyu's study on the subject of middle class relating to Nagaland has been published in *NEIHA Proceedings* (Guwahati, 1988).

Till 1990 the only detailed monograph on middle class hegemony was Manorama Sharma's *Social and Economic Change in Assam* (Delhi, 1990). M. Sharma has first made a detailed conceptual study and then gone into the Assamese variant in particular. Her analysis of the Assamese middle class is based on a study of social and economic changes in Assam between 1860-1910.

Christianity

During the period 1970-1990 which this review covers, the literature on Christianity in North East India both continues the trend in Church histories of the region and enters into a refreshing look at the developments of the faith. The histories written by missionaries or commissioned by their mission boards long being out of print many have been

reprinted. Christopher Becker's *Im Stromtal des Brahmaputra*, a narrative history of the Catholic Mission in Assam published in 1923 and revised in 1927, was translated by G. Stadler and S. Karotemprel and published by the Vendrame Missiological Institute of Sacred Heart Theological College in 1980 as *History of the Catholic Missions in Northeast India (1890-1915)*. While this edition covered the history of the Salvatorian mission in Assam from 1890 to 1915, the earlier history of the Paris Foreign Missionaries between 1850-1870 was not translated from the original German text. Subsequently the first part of Becker's history was also translated by F. Leicht and S. Karotemprel and published by the same Institute in 1989 as *Early History of Catholic Missions in Northeast India*. Reginald Lorrain's memoir of 1912, *Five Years in Unknown Jungles: For God and for Empire* has been reprinted (Gauhati, 1988) keeping the title unchanged. It traces the beginning of the Arthington Aborigine Mission and the American Baptist Mission in the hill of Manipur. Other original texts of the American Baptist Mission that have been reprinted are P.H. Moore's, *Twenty Years in Assam or Leaves from My Journal* (New Delhi); and Mary Mead Clark's *a Corner in India* (Gauhati, 1978).

The history of Christianity in North East India is fragmented; it has largely been centred on particular missions or among a particular tribe or community. In part this has arisen from the interest taken by theological students in their Church's past. Into this category fall Fortis Jyrwa, *The Wonderous Works of God: A Study of tzeghalaya* (Guwahati, 1978); K. Linyu, *The Angami Church Since 1870* (Bangalore, 1983); R. Lolly, *The Baptist Church in Manipur: A Historical Survey* (Imphal, 1985); Y.A. Konyak, *From Darkness to Light: A Story of the Baptist Work Among the Konyak Nagas* (Guwahati, 1986) to mention only a few of the vast literature emerging from theological institutions.

Apart from Hminga's important study, Mizoram Church history is covered by Zairema, *God's Miracle in Mizoram: A Glimpse of Christian Work Among Head Hunters* (Aizawl, 1978); and Lal Biak Thanga, *The Mizos: A Study in Racial Personality* (Guwahati, 1978). Thankim Serto attempts a biography of Mary Suderland in *The Last Missionary of*

American Baptist Churches in North East India (Imphal, 1986). This is an account of her work among the Tangkhuls of Manipur. Lal Dena views the development of Christianity from a different perspective in *Christian Missions and Colonialism: A Study of Missionary Movement in North East India with Particular Reference to Manipur and Lushai Hills 1894-1947* (Shillong, 1988).

An academic and completely outsider's view of Christianity among the Khasi-Jaintia is provided in Nalani Natarjan, *The Missionary Among the Khasis* (New Delhi, 1977). Not only does she cover the larger missions at work in this area, she has also made a study of resistance movements to the spread of Christianity and noted the growth of a large number of smaller and indigenous churches. Milton Sangma first exercise in research — *History and Culture of the Garos* (New Delhi, 1981) draws attention to Garo traditional religion and its erosion with the advent of Christianity. In his other book, *History of Education in Garo Hills* (Guwahati, 1985), he elaborates on the education provided by the American Baptist Mission.

Baptists and Catholics have strong followings in Nagaland. Joseph Puthenpurakal's purpose of researching on and eventually publishing *Baptist Missions in Nagaland* (Shillong, 1984) was to bring about a better understanding among Christians working in that state. Another important study on the Baptists is P.T. Philip, *The Growth of Baptist Churches in Nagaland* (Guwahati, 1983). The Catholic dimension is provided in D.R. Syiemlieh, *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Nagaland* (Shillong, 1990).

Assam is fairly well covered by literature on Christian Missions. F.S. Downs first major exercise in what would eventually be his speciality — Christianity in North East India — was *The Mighty Works of God: A Brief History of the CBCNEI, the Mission Period 1836-1950* (Guwahati, 1971). This covered the American Baptist Mission in Assam and the Naga Hills, the Naga inhabited hills of Manipur and the Garo Hills. It was as he writes a denominational history. M.S. Sangma's *History of American Baptist Mission in North-East India* (New Delhi, 1987) has studied the American Baptist Mission among the people of Assam, Arunachal

Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Manipur. H.K. Barpujari has put together an important book of letters, reports, extracts from biographies of American missionaries in the areas mentioned. His introduction to *The American Mission and North East India* (Guwahati, 1986) assesses the significant contribution of the American Baptists in various fields of activity.

Research on Christian missions in North East India has been taken up by many Indian universities. Courses on the subject for the M.A., B.Th., M.Th. are offered in full or in part in some universities and theological colleges. The studies have been encouraged and stimulated largely by the efforts of Frederick Downs. Having done a denominational history of the American Baptist Mission, he produced a small pamphlet, *Christianity in North East India* (Serampore, 1976) and priced at Rs. 1.50 only. From this he put together the well received *Christianity in North East India: Historical Perspective* (Delhi and Guwahati, 1983). By then his articles on various aspects of the faith appeared in various Journals — "Missionaries and the Language Controversy in Assam", *Journal of the University of Gauhati* (XXVIII-XXIX, 1 Arts. 1977-1978); "Social Influences on Nineteenth Century Baptist Missionaries in India", *American Baptist Quarterly* (Vol. VIII, 4, 1989); "Christianity as a Tribal Response to Change in Northeast India", *Missiology* (Vol. VIII 4, 1980). His articles mentioned above and in numerous other Journals such as the *Indian Church History Review* has taken research from narration to interpretation and analysis. Another of his seminal papers, "Historiographical Issues in the Study of Christianity in North East India", published in the *Proceedings of the North East India History Association* (Kohima, 1987) has generated much enthusiasm and become a guide on how to conduct research and write on the subject.

Apart from being a catalyst for social change among the communities that adopted the Christian faith, Christianity was instrumental in promoting political consciousness. Two books have worked on this development. John A. Hluna, *Church and Political Upheaval in Mizoram: A Study of Impact of Christianity on the Political Development in*

Mizoram (Aizawl, 1985), makes a case that Christianity was an important factor for political awareness and participation in the politics of Mizoram. His book is especially useful in explaining the role Churches played in the peace process after a decade of "insurgency". *Nagaland Church and Politics* (Kohima, 1986), by Rev. V.K. Nuh attempts the same purpose for Nagaland but the presentation of the material used has not been put in as readable fashion as that of Hluna's book.

Apart from the books referred above which deal with Christianity in North East India in its many dimensions and specific to communities and tribes in the region, the general histories referred to earlier have made brief but analytical references to Christianity. From the early 1970's much interest was directed on the North East for its changing political scenario with its developments towards statehood for a number of states and their societies undergoing a process of change with numerous factors operating. The Simla Institute organised a seminar to discuss *The Tribal Situation in India* (Simla, 1972), which became the title of the collection of papers. Much attention was drawn in that discussion towards North East India where opinion ranged from tribal leaders advocating positions reflecting their society's desires, to comment by knowledgeable and some casual researchers on this sensitive region which reflects both their geographical distance and apathy for the region.

Resistance: Nationalism, Regionalism and Integration

H.K. Barpujai, "Facts Behind the Jaintia Rebellion 1862-1864", *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. 51, Pt. 1, 1973, was among the earliest studies on resistance movements to British expansion and imperialism in North East India. On the same subject S. Goswami published "A Fresh Look at the Jaintia Rebellion", *Social Scientist*, Vol. 3, No. 2, February 1985. A third article, this one by J.B. Bhattacharjee, "The Jaintia Rebellion", in N.R. Ray *et al.* (eds.) *Challenge: A Saga for India's Struggle for Freedom* (New Delhi, 1994), gave new insights into this long drawn struggle. The same volume has two other articles on resistance movements in

the region, Ramesh Ch. Kalita has examined the "Anti Imperialism Upsurge Assam 1942-1943", while Jiban Mukhopadhyaya has studied "Reang Unrest 1942-43".

NEIHA's contribution to this theme starts with its first *Proceedings*. In the Shillong Session (1980) N.R. Roychoudhury explained the causes of the "Tribal Uprisings in Tripura in the Nineteenth century." The late Subhas Saha was shaping up as a fine historian. An article of his "People's Raj in Assam: A Study of Socio-Economic Roots," was published in *NEIHA Proceedings*, Fifth Session (Aizawl, 1984). Lalrimawia presented a paper "Lushai Rising 1870-95" at the Sixth Session (Agartala, 1985). This volume also includes the article of Suchintya Bhattacharjee, "Historical Survey of Tribal Uprising in Tripura". After two years where no paper on resistance movement was read, the Tenth Session (Shillong, 1989) papers on this theme were presented by Shrutidev Goswami, "The Raj Mels: Their Historical Role in Peasant Movements of Assam"; R.C. Kalita, "The Phulaguri Uprising of 1861: A Peasant Mass Movement"; we have earlier noted Manorama Sharma's contribution on this subject; Srinibash Panda, "Abor Rebellion 1911-12: A Post Mortem of the Murder of Noel Williamson", and Milton S. Sangma "Last Resistance of the Garos to British Imperialism". The Eleventh Session (Imphal, 1990) has papers of J.V. Hluna, "Ropuiliani: Her Role in the Freedom Struggle" and Sangkima, "A Mizo Uprising: A Significant event in the History of chieftainship in Mizoram".

In this broad theme may be included biographies and biographical sketches on resistance leaders and nationalists. The Ninth Session of NEIHA has two articles on Tirot Singh, Syiem of Nongkhlaw in the Khasi Hills. These are by Dr. D.R. Syiemlieh, "Two Perceptions of U. Tirot Singh" and M.P.R. Lyngdoh, "Immortalizing Tirot Singh". Before these articles were published, Hamlet Bareh wrote *U Tirot Singh* (Delhi, 1984), a comprehensive history of Khasi Syiem. Preference should be given to Bareh's detailed biography though J.E. Tariang produced a small tract *U. Tirot Singh* (Shillong, 1982). This lacks historical presentation and an exhaustive use of available sources.

Another important trend in historical research in the region are studies on nationalism. Amalendu Guha wrote a seminal piece, "Nationalism: Pan Indian and Regional in a Historical Perspective", in *Social Scientist*, No. 3, February 1984. In 1 April 1986, the North-East India Council For Social Science Research organised a seminar on "Nationalities, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in the Context of North-East India". A number of papers had an historical perspective to the question under review. The NEICSSR has published the proceedings of the seminar is edited by B. Pakem, *Nationality, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity in North East India* (New Delhi, 1990). A search through Soumen Sen, *Two Decades of Growth 1974-1994 North East India Council for Social Science Research* (Shillong, 1994)⁷ shows no article on this theme has been published in its journal.

Nationalism, sub-nationalism, integration are dominating themes at NEIHA conferences. In the Second Session (Dibrugarh, 1981) papers on these subjects were read by S.K. Barpujari on the Revolt of 1857 in Assam; Shiela Bora, on an aspect of the Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam; V. Venkata Rao on Assamese nationalism and Sajal Nag on the emergence of language politics in Assam. The Third Session (Imphal, 1982) has Sajal Nag writing on working class alienation in Swadeshi and Non Cooperation ... movements; Dipankar Banerjee's note on the Congress in the 1919-1939 labour struggle in Assam; B.J. Deb and D.K. Lahiri jointly worked on, Gurkha Politics in Assam; M. Jitendra Singh elaborated on Meitei revivalist movement in the 19th century; V. Venkata Rao presented a paper on Meitei nationalism and Ksh. Bimala Devi spoke on regionalism in the region. The Fourth Session (Barapani, 1983) had only one paper relating to nationalism in Dilip K. Chattopadhyaya, "History of the Assam Movement since 1947". The Sixth Session (Agartala, 1985) published papers by Shrutidev Goswami on the Jorhat Sorbojonik Sobha; Subhas Saha, the role of the left intellectuals; Mahadev Chakravarty on Communist activities in Tripura in 1939-42; Ranjit Kr. De worked out a note on terrorist activities in Tripura (1930-1933) and Himansu Pal wrote a piece on

students' movement in Tripura (1950–1970). The Seventh Session (Pasighat, 1986) had seven well written articles ranging from Rajendra Saikia on Anandaram and Maniram; Sajal Nag on aspects of nationality formation in 19th century Assam; Ranjit Kr. De who specialises on Tripura examined the impact of the Non-Cooperation Movement on that state; D. Pandey made a study on the Muslim League politics in Assam, S. Bora highlighted the role of the Assam Chatra Sanmilan; Meeta Deka provided the roots, continuity and sustenance of student movement in Assam, and Amalendu Guha bringing up the rear with "The Evolution of the Congress Movement in Assam and its Radicalisation 1885–1947".⁸ Ranjit Kr. De studied the formation of the Tribal Congress Committee (1939–1942). Published in the Eighth Session (Kohima, 1987) the volume also as an interesting article by Meeta Deka on Subhas Chandra Bose's visit to Shillong in 1939 and Bhupen Qanungo summary of material in the AIOC files and the Government of India's political files on the individual Satyagraha movement in Assam (1940–41).

After so many references to nationalism in the volumes referred to, the Ninth Session (Guwahati, 1988) has no paper on this or related themes. The Tenth Session (Shillong, 1989) has A.K. Baruah analysing Ambikagiri Ray Choudhury's ideas reflected in *Ahuti*. J.B. Bhattacharjee in this same volume sees the reaction of the people of the Surma valley to the transfer of the valley to Assam (1874). The Eleventh Session (Imphal, 1990) has Girin Phukan writing on the Tai-Ahom search for identity in Assam and Subhas Saha does a brief note on the character and trends of regionalism in the north-east.

The first book of Sajal Nag *Roots of Ethnic Conflict: Nationality Question in North East India* (New Delhi, 1990) attempts to explain changes in Assamese society with the advent of British capitalism and conflict with the established and advanced nationality of Bengalis living in Assam. The nationality question is given a Marxist interpretation with emphasis on Assam. Another book to note on this theme without the approach taken by Sajal Nag, is K.M. Deka, *Nationalism and Regionalism in North East India* (Dibrugarh, 1985).

On the question of the integration of North East India with the Indian Union the articles that have been published and there are not many—have raised issues that are becoming relevant today. D.R. Syiemlieh read a paper on the integration of the Khasi states at the First Session of the NEIHA (Shillong, 1980). Ksh Shyamkanhai Singh's article on the merger of Manipur with India was incorporated in the *NEIHA Proceedings*, Third Session (Imphal, 1982). N. Joykumar Singh wrote a well researched paper on the movement for responsible government in Manipur for the Association's Fourth Session (Barapani, 1983). Ksh. Shyamkanhai Singh submitted a fairly detailed account of the Manipur State Constitution Act 1947 for the Fifth Session (Aizawl, 1984). At the Sixth Session (Agartala, 1985) N. Joykumar Singh read a paper "The Merger of Manipur into India". Bimal J. Dev and Dilip K. Lahiri gave a joint article on the issues at stake on the accession of Manipur to the Indian Federation. Tripura finds a place in this trend of research with an essay by Benimadhab Majumdar on the Struggle for Responsible Government in Tripura (1947-1956), published in the Sixth Session *Proceedings of NEIHA*.

We may note three more articles on this theme. Hiren Gohain presented "Problems of Unity in Assam on the Eve of Independence", for Amit Kr. Gupta (ed.) *Myth and Reality: The Struggle For Freedom in India 1945-1947* (New Delhi, 1987). His stand on immigration into Assam before Independence is different to that taken by Amalendu Guha in articles and books referred to earlier. "The Partition of India and Pakistan 1947 and 1971" was the theme of a special issue of the *Indo British Review: A Journal of History*, Vol. XVII, No. 1 & 2, September-December 1989. Two historians of the region made contribution to this issue; D.R. Syiemlieh presented a detailed analysis of the "Response of the North Eastern Hill Tribes of India towards Partition and Independence", and J.B. Bhattacharjee's contribution was entitled "Sylhet: Myth of a Referendum".

The 11 Proceedings volumes of NEIHA between 1980-1990 include 469 papers. The largest number of papers relate to the Brahmaputra valley and the Barak valley. In NEIHA is to be seen in significant trend. Historians from

the tribal communities are beginning to take an interest in their past and presenting papers on varied subjects. If as J.B. Bhattacharjee mentions⁹ of the 90 odd papers on North East India published in the *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* between 1939 and 1987 have only 19 papers on the hills, NEIHA whose origin is drawn from the national association has truly achieved and continuing to promote historical research in the region in which the hills are receiving due attention. We have made reference to a number of themes covered in the *Proceedings of NEIHA*. It will not be possible to make reference to all the articles. It may suffice to mention in conclusion that other themes that have been taken up for discussion are oral tradition, tribal institutions, technology, labour movements, integration of tribes into the region, Chieftainships and tribal institutions, political and social developments among still many more interesting areas of research.

The *Journal of the North East India Council for Social Science Research* has also stimulated historical research in the region. Articles by J.B. Bhattacharjee, N.S. Bose, Mahadev Chakravarti, L.S. Gassah, Shrutidev Goswami, Imdad Hussain, B. Pakem, J.N. Phukan, Milton Sangma, Soumen Sen and J.P. Singh, in particular and collectively have enriched the historical writing on their own areas of research. The NEICSSR Bi-Decennial Celebrations report of its publications is a useful guide.¹⁰

University and Other Journals

Because of their broad cover of articles University journals have not been able to give attention to the history of the region. However, prior to the establishment of the NEIHA and NEICSSR and some other associations University journals provided one avenue of publishing articles and information on new findings and interpretations. For many years the *Journal of the University of Gauhati* (Arts) was published by Maheshwar Neog. Published with some regularity but invariably a year or two later, articles covering the years of this review have been published by N.N. Acharya, J.N. Phukan, Venkata Rao, George Gillespie among others.

The Dibrugarh University has gone one step further. In March 1974 appeared *Journal of Historical Research*. This too has been fairly irregular but its contents and special issues on particular historical problems give hope that it will have better days. With J.B. Bhattacharjee taking over as editor of the *North-Eastern Hill University Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, he was able to draw scholars to write on historical subjects. Some references have already been made to select articles of this journal.

The North Eastern Regional Centre of the ICSSR brought out a first and only issue of *NERC Bi-Annual Journal of Social Sciences* (March, 1981). It had no article on history. The Research Department of the Government of Arunachal Pradesh has with much more regularly than other journals been able to publish its journal containing articles of general interest relating to Arunachal Pradesh. *North East Spectrum* was a monthly with potential of becoming the most widely read publication. Its discontinuation and the same fate of *North Eastern Quarterly*, *Social Research*, *Khasi Studies* to name only a few that come to mind, is that unless a journal has a broad membership and its management able to hand over to persons who have a genuine interest in the publication, these will fade with time.

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1. See J.B. Bhattacharjee, "NEIHA: The Formative Decade", in *NEIHA Decennial*, Department of History, NEHU, Shillong, 1989, pp. 23-28.
2. The names of the authors have been indicated to enable those interested in the study of historiography to follow the researches on various historiographical issues.
3. The NEIHA Proceedings from its 12th to 19th Sessions while continuing the approach established in the previous volumes already reviewed has set in a more analytical and philosophical approach to the subject.
4. M. Sharma and J.B. Bhattacharjee (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 1-8.
5. "Land Rights and Social Classes in Medieval Assam", *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 3, September 1966; and "Colonialisation of Assam: Years of transitional Crisis 1825-1840", *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, No. 2, June, 1968.
6. *The North Eastern Quarterly*, a journal devoted to social science research pertaining to North East India aimed at providing informa-

tion, documentation and objective analysis regarding the social, cultural, economic, political and demographic problems with a focus on the peculiar nature of problems facing the tribals and other ethnic communities. Its issues have been intermittent and all but ceases publication.

7. This very useful report of the NEICSSR indicates the seminars organised, publications of seminar proceedings and lists all the articles and book reviews in the *Journal of the NEICSSR*.
8. An earlier draft of A. Guha's paper was presented at a Conference on "100 Years of the Indian National Congress" held at Oxford 23-25 November, 1985.
9. J.B. Bhattacharjee, "NEIHA: The Formative Decade", *NEIHA Decennial*, Shillong, 1989, p. 25.
10. Soumen Sen, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-24.

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