

Persian as a Source of Ahom-Mughal Relations in the 17th Century

Anowar Hussain

The reconstruction of the past does not consist in a mere recital of facts. As Namier says, the historian is a painter and not a photographer with his own (arbitrary) sense or vision of importance of facts.¹ His tools are the sources of history. But Popper has shown that the so called "sources" of history only record such facts as appeared sufficiently interesting to record so that sources will contain only facts that fit in with a pre conceived theory.² A scholar, however, need not depend on partisan propaganda and should trace the other sources such as archaeological, accounts of foreign travellers, literature, coins, inscriptions etc. Going through the chronicles it is found in a number of cases that the statement of Popper has sufficient ground for its support. The doubtful partisan propaganda should be carefully examined with non-literary sources like coins, inscriptions, and archaeological remains in all possible cases.

Before going to classify the sources, it would be better to give a brief idea of the political relations of the Ahoms with the Mughals in the 17th Century.

Political relations of the Ahoms with the Mughals in the 17th century forms an interesting chapter of mediaeval Indian history. The very fact that Assam, a small kingdom in the extreme north-east frontier of India, could resist the repeated attacks of the Mughals and thereby check their aggressive imperialism towards the east has a great significance in the political history of the period.³ As such, a study of Ahom's relations with the Mughals cannot fail to be of absorbing interest to all lovers of history.

The political relations between the mighty Mughals and the Ahoms began through the kingdom of Koch Behar in the beginning of the 16th century. Koch Behar was bounded on

the west by the river Karotoya and on the east by river Bar-nadi. It grew into a powerful state under Naranarayana. The Koches were resolute to resist the advance of the Mughals and establish in stead, their own pre-dominance in the north eastern India.

The persian sources in writing the Ahom-Mughal political relations in the 17th Century can be studied under the following heads.

Farmans

Five farmans of Emperor Aurangzeb addressed to Raja Ram Singha have been preserved in the Rajasthan state archives, Bikaner and their true copies have been obtained by the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam, Gauhati. These were written by Jafar Khan, Aurangzeb's Prime-minister in his 12th regnal year. Through these farmans Emperor Aurangzeb had given encouragement to Raja Ram Singha when he inflicted war with the Ahoms in 1667 A.D. and urged him to recover Gauhati from the Ahoms and also informed him of despatching reinforcement of men and materials under the command of Muzaffar Khan and Jalaluddin from Dacca.

General Works

A number of persian chronicles written during that or later period throw some new light on this aspect. Of these, *Fathiyah --i-Ibriyah*⁵ written by Ibn Muhammad Wali Ahmed Shihabuddin Talish, compiled in the *Shawal* of 1073 i.e., May 1663, *Waqiat-i-Alamgiri*⁶ written by Aqil Khan Razi, *Baharistan-i-Ghayibi*⁷ by Mirza Nathan Allauddin Ispahani, *Alamgir Nama*⁸ by Mirza Muhammad Qazim, *Maasir-i-Alamgiri*⁹ compiled by Muhammad Saqi Mustai'd Khan which was completed in 1710-11, and *Futuh-i-Alamgiri*¹⁰ by Iswardas Nagar and a vast collection of the *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* or news of the imperial court of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, which has been preserved in the Rajasthan State Archives at Bikaner give us some important information regarding the events of this period.

Inscriptions

A considerable number of inscriptions written in persian and bearing on political relations between these two

powers have been recovered in various places of Assam. Some of them contain detailed account of the incidents for which they were inscribed whereas in some of them the contents are so brief that they simply make reference to the victory of the Ahom King, without any mention even of the enemy camp. Of these, land grant to the temple of Umananda at Gauhati by Badshah Ghazi Aurangzeb Salar Khan, Munger Shah Mafah Inscription, Hazo Mosque Inscription, Manekachar Mosque Inscription and Boko Rock Inscription give us some new information of the events of the period. Moreover, a number of Inscriptions inscribed on cannon written in Persian was found in the different places of Assam like Dikom, Tinsukia, Margherita, Silghat and Gauhati. The one found at Dikom bears a Persian Inscription recording that it was placed in charge of Ahmad-Al-Hussain for the purpose of conquering Assam in 1074 Hijri (1667 A.D.)

Coins

Three coins bearing the name of Shahjahan were found at Sibsagar. One of these coins bear the Persian legend *Badshah Ghazi Shahjahan* in the reverse *Sahabuddin Muhammad Sahe be Kerane Sani-Zure-ba Akbarabad* in the margin and names of four Khalifavis, Abu Bakar, Omar, Osman and Ali in the obverse. The reverse legend states that Shahjahan's full name was Sahabuddin Muhammad and the coin was minted at his orders at Akbarabad as mentioned in the margin. Four Silver coins bearing the name of Emperor Aurangzeb in Persian were found at Sibsagar, Assam. One of them is dated "24, 1092 Hijri" corresponding to March 24, 1680 and the dates of the other three cannot be deciphered. The mint place of one is given as Bijapur. The other three were minted at Akbaranagar and Jahangirnagar. These coins were probably carried by Mir Jumla, Ram Singha and Monsur Khan who came to invade Assam during the time of Emperor Aurangzeb. Moreover, five undated Silver coins were found recently at Panbari, a place situated about 14 miles north of Dhubri in the district of Goalpara in Assam. These coins bear respectively the Persian legends as follows : (a) *Shah Ghazi* (obverse), *Jalus-Mai-Manat-Manhus* (reverse) (b) *Badshah Ghazi Shahjahan* (Obverse) *Lai-illaha-illal-lahu-Muhamadar Rosul Ullah* (reverse) (c) *Badshah Ghazi Alamgir* (Obverse) *Jalus Maimanat-Mohus-San* (reverse) (d) *Badshah* (ovverse) *San-e-Jalus* (reverse) (e)

Shah-Bahadur Badshah Ghazi (obverse) and *Sane-e-Julus 24* (reverse). These coins are now in the State Museum, Assam, Gauhati, which throw some new light in the political relations of the Ahom-Mughals in the seventeenth century.

References

1. Cited in Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *Thoughts on the study of Indian History*, General President's Address, Indian History Congress, Calicut Session, 1979, p. 16.
2. K. R. Popper, "*The Open Society*" (2nd ed. 1952) cited in Sarkar, *ibid*, p. 16.
3. S. K. Chatterjee, 'The Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India', *Banikanta Memorial Lecture Series* (Gauhati, 1970), p. 38.
4. Lakshmi Devi, *Ahom Tribal Relations* (Gauhati, 1968), p. 221.
5. Ms. Bodl. Op. 589 available in the library of History Deptt., Aligarh Muslim University. A portion of it has been translated into English by Sir J. N. Sarkar in the *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, 1915, Vol. 1, pp. 179-195. An abstract of it was published by H. Blochmann in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1872, pp. 64-96.
6. It has been edited by Khan Bahadur Maulavi Zafar Hasan (Delhi, 1945).
7. It has been edited and translated into English by Dr. M. I. Borah and published by the Deptt. of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam, Gauhati in two volumes (1936).
8. It has been edited by Maulavi Khadim Hussain and Maulavi Abdul Hai in *Bibliotheca Indica*, Calcutta, 1865-73.
9. It has been edited by Maulavi Agha Ahmed Ali in *Bibliotheca Indica*, Calcutta, 1870-73. It has been translated into English by Sir J. N. Sarkar in *Bibliotheca Indica*, Calcutta, 1947.
10. It has been edited and translated into English by Tasneem Ahmed, New Delhi, 1978.
11. *Nafah* is a Persian word meaning 'Pod of mask'.