



# EARLY BRITISH RELATIONS WITH ASSAM

A STUDY OF THE ORIGINAL SOURCES AND RECORDS ELUCIDATING THE HISTORY  
OF ASSAM FOR THE PERIOD FROM ITS FIRST CONTACT WITH THE HONOURABLE  
EAST INDIA COMPANY TO THE TRANSFER OF THE COMPANY'S  
TERRITORIES TO THE CROWN IN 1858

WITH

NOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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## PREFACE

Historical investigations in Assam are fraught with serious handicaps, and subjects on which volumes would have been written elsewhere are wrapped up here in a mass of chaotic confusion; and one is almost tempted to repeat the words of the medieval scholar,—“If you want to read any book you will have to write it.” The following pages will convince the reader of the existence of a large mass of materials illuminating a very interesting chapter of the history of Assam, and of the meagre use that has hitherto been made of them. The political wisdom and administrative genius of men like Colonel Thomas Welsh, David Scott and Major-General Francis Jenkins—the triumvirate of the period under review—who consolidated British power in the strategic North-Eastern Frontier of India, would have been immortalised in the pages of some hero-worshipping Boswell had their field of activity been anywhere else except in this benighted quarter of the globe.

Here I embrace the opportunity of acknowledging my indebtedness to those but for whose help the following pages could not have been compiled; to Mr. C. S. Mullan, I.C.S., for the two monumental works on the North-East Frontier by Pemberton and Mackenzi; to Mr. J.R. Cunningham, C.I.E., for the original India Office manuscripts of Dr. Wadse's History and Geography of Assam, and several volumes of rare historical books and Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, from the Shillong Public Library; to Mr. G. S. Guha, M.A., B.L., F.R.E.S., for being instrumental in sending me Dr. Wade's Geography; to Dr. J.H. Htuton, C.I.E., C.I.S., for permitting me to consult the records of the Ethnography Office at the Assam Secretariat; to Srijut Hemchandra Goswami for a volume of articles on Assam published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal; to Rev. A. J. Tuttle for the biographies of Brown and Bronson; to Srijut Jnananath Bara, B. L., for Mills' Report; to Srijut Jagannath Kakati and Srijut Amritkanta Bara for typing out the manuscript; to Srijut Nilanath Sarma for several volumes not ordinarily available; to Mr. A. F. M. Abdul Ali, M. A., Keeper of the Imperial Records at Calcutta, for securing the permission of the Government of India to supply me a copy of the East India Company's Agreement with Gaurinath Singha requiring the latter to defray the expenses of the Company's troops serving in Assam; to Lieutenant-Colonel P. R. T. Gurdon, C. S. I., I. A., retired, for

bringing my labours to light through the pages of the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. I need not add that the bulk of the materials discussed are derived from publications deposited in the libraries of the Cotton College, and the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti or the Assam Research Society, Gauhati. References to the books and records drawn upon for information will be found in the foot-notes, in the body of the volume and in the bibliographical appendix.

I cannot adequately express my profound gratitude to Mr. J.R. Cunningham whose kindly interest in the present work was chiefly instrumental in obtaining the sanction of the Government of Assam for its printing and publication, as a fitting sequel to the long chain of measures taken by it, in spite of its limited resources, for the advancement of historical and anthropological investigations in the province.

COTTON COLLEGE, }  
 GAUHATI, ASSAM ; }  
*February 29, 1928.* }

S. K. BHUYAN.



# EARLY BRITISH RELATIONS WITH ASSAM

## INTRODUCTORY

The object of the following pages is not to present an exhaustive study of the relations of Assam with the Honourable East India Company prior to the British occupation of the country in 1826, and of the early years of that connection. In fact, the limited resources of a worker stationed at Gauhati, far away from the facilities of a well-stocked library of historical books and records, deny all opportunities for such an attempt. I have chiefly been inspired by the desire to draw the attention of the public and of the authorities to the vast mine of historical information buried in the archives of the Bengal and the Imperial Record-rooms, the India Office, the British Museum and the District and Divisional offices of Assam. My observations have been mainly based on the published records of the East India Company which have found their way into Assam and where the eclecticism of their eminent compilers was mainly influenced by their idea of the importance of the published narratives to the historians of Bengal and India, rather than of Assam.

Assam was first discovered to the western world virtually in the last decade of the eighteenth century through the indefatigable efforts of the servants of the East India Company, and the details of that discovery and the Company's knowledge of Assam are to be found in their official despatches and correspondence which were necessary in view of the distance separating the Company's Provincial and Imperial headquarters from its servants engaged in actual administration and other transactions on the spot. No exhaustive history of the period has yet been written, but before making any such attempt the available records must be systematically classified and thoroughly studied.

Sir Edward Gait has given us a succinct survey of the period in his admirable *History of Assam*, which for its critical acumen and scientific treatment of facts stands still unrivalled; but like all pioneers of historical investigation, he has only sketched the outline the details of which are to be filled in with the help of materials derived from a more minute and exhaustive study of the contemporary records available up-to-date. Sir Alexander Mackenzie examined the Judicial, Revenue and Political Proceedings and the earlier Consultations of the Governments of Bengal and India, the Secret Proceedings of the Supreme Government and the Assam Proceedings of the Foreign Office of the Government of India. The results of his labours have been embodied in his "History of the Relations of Government with the Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal", published in 1884. But Mackenzie's researches were not primarily directed to the general history of Assam, as we learn from the very title of the book.

The records of the East India Company in the words of James Grant Duff, as re-iterated by Lord Willingdon in opening the Madras session of the Indian Historical Records Commission, "afford the best historical material in the world"; they can be examined to throw light on many hitherto unexplored phases of the history of Assam. The student of

Historical value of East India Company records.

constitutional history will find observations of western scholars and eye-witnesses on the machinery of the indigenous form of government; those interested in political history will find learned reviews of past events and the accurate records of contemporary affairs: the student of sociology and anthropology will find glimpses of many customs, now dissipated by the force of surroundings, but then prevailing in full swing, which were marked as highly peculiar by western observers who were not till then initiated into a knowledge of the mysteries of Indian life; the student of commercial and economic history will be able to trace in these records the beginnings of many of the present-day aspects of trade and finance. The supreme value of the records, as far as Assam is concerned, consists in their embodiment of the critical observations of western scholars of a system of government which is no longer in existence, and of a society which has undergone considerable transformation as a result of the increasing conflux of new influences and ideals. The careers of many political pioneers are buried in the dilapidated pages of the records, and it is only after their careful and thorough study that administrators and soldiers like Colonel Thomas Welsh, David Scott and Major-General Francis Jenkins may emerge from the limbo of oblivion to which they have been consecrated, and occupy their merited "place in history by the side of Malcolm, Elphinstone and Metcalfe"<sup>1</sup>.

## SECTION I

### RECORDS OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY

Assam is one of the last provinces to come under British occupation. But even before the Treaty of Yandaboo, 1826, the Honourable East India Company had taken sufficient interest in the province specially in view of the possibilities of opening up trade facilities. The first authorised visit that Europeans paid to Assam in the pre-Yandaboo period was the expedition of Captain Welsh despatched in 1792 by Lord Cornwallis to suppress the marauding depredations of Bengal burkendazes. Assam was, however, fortunate to receive sporadic visits from Firinghees or Europeans even before the expedition of Captain Welsh. So early as the reign of King Pratapsingha, 1603-1641, during the period of Muhammadan conflicts, a Firinghee is reported to have fired at our soldiers from Soalkuchi, near Gauhati.<sup>2</sup> He was captured and sent under escort to Gargaon, the Ahom capital. Mirjumla, who invaded Assam in 1662, brought with him a large number of Dutch soldiers, who were chiefly employed as gunners and naval officers.<sup>1</sup> The experiences of one of these sailors in the pestilential regions of Assam have been graphically recorded in the *Loss of the Ter Schelling*, compiled by Glanius in 1682.

<sup>1</sup> Sir Alexander Mackenzie's oft quoted tribute to David Scott may also be applied to the memory of Colonel Thomas Welsh and Major-General Francis Jenkins.—"The name and fame of David Scott are still green on the North-East Frontier. He was one of those remarkable men who have from time to time been the ornament of our Indian Services. Had the scene of his labours been in North-West or Central India, where the great problem of Empire was then being worked out, he would occupy a place in history by the side of Malcolm, Elphinstone and Metcalfe."—*North-East Frontier of Bengal*.

<sup>2</sup>Purani Assam Buranji, published as a serial in the Assamese magazine 'Arunodoi' for April, 1852, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup>History of Aurengzeb, Vol. III, by Prof. J. N. Sircar.

The courts of Assamese monarchs and the interiors of Assam were visited by two Jesuit Missionaries in 1626, named  
 Jesuit missionaries. Stephan Cacella and T. Cabral,<sup>1</sup> who have left accounts of their experiences in the province. I have been told by Signor Giuseppe Tucci, Professor of Religion and Philosophy of India and the Far East in the University of Rome, that there are nearly two hundred letters addressed by Jesuit missionaries in the archives of the Vatican at Rome, and that they throw a remarkable flood of light on the social and political condition of Assam of that period. Besides, we learn from an old chronicle of Assam, written in the Ahom language, about the visit of four Europeans to the Ahom capital at Rangpur in 1739, who presented several interesting articles to the reigning king Siva Singha.<sup>2</sup> One Ralph Fitch visited the court of Cooch Behar during the reign of Maharaja Naranarayan and has left us a very interesting account of his observations.<sup>3</sup>

Ralph Fitch writes of Cooch Behar,—“The people have hospitals for sheep, goats, dogs, cats, birds and for all other living  
 Ralph Fitch and Heyleyn. creatures. When they be old and lame, they keep them until they die. If a man catch or buy any quick thing in other places and bring it thither, they will give him money for it of other victuals, and keep it in their hospitals or let it go.”<sup>4</sup> This testimony of the almost Buddhistic veneration of the lower creatures as practised in Cooch Behar in the sixteenth century is confirmed by the remarks of Peter Heyleyn in *India intra Gangem and extra Gangem*, 1652,—“The country of Couche is rich, by reason that it may be drowned, and dried up again, when the people will; full of good pastures by that means, and those well stored with sheep, goats, swine, deer and other cattle, though the people neither kill nor eat them; but on the contrary they build hospitals for them, in which when lame and old they are kept till they die.”<sup>5</sup>

There is evidence of several Christian missionaries visiting Assam in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The Mogul  
 Other missionary visits. garrison of Rangamati in Goalpara had a large Christian population with two churches, ‘one dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary and the other to Our Lady of Guadalupe.’ It was visited by Father Barbier, S. J., in about 1720, by Frey Sicardo, O. S. A. about 1696, by Padre Marco della Tomba between 1758 and

<sup>1</sup>*Early Jesuit Travellers in Central Asia, 1603-1621*, by C. Wersells, S. T. Martinus Nijhoff, the Hague, 1924. Vide *Indian Antiquary*, for October 1925. Mirjumla's physician during his Assam campaign was a Dutch surgeon, named Gelmar Vorburg whose letter, dated December 10, 1662, written from Assam, is referred to in the entry of April 8, 1663, in the Batavia Dag Register; see Irvine's edition of Manucci's "Storia de Mogor," Vol. IV, p. 430.

<sup>2</sup>History of Assam in the Ahom language from Khuulung and Khuulai, English translation by Rai Sahib G. C. Barua, unpublished. To avoid confusion I have spelt the name of the Ahom capital as *Rangpur*, while the Bengal district of that name has been spelt as *Rungpoor*.

<sup>3</sup>Gait's History of Assam, 1st edition, pages 45 and 59. *Ralph Fitch: England's Pioneer to India and Burma*, edited by J. Horton Ryley, 1899.

<sup>4</sup>*Ralph Fitch*, edited by Ryley. page 112.

<sup>5</sup>The complete title of Heyleyn's book is,—“Cosmographie, in Four Books, containing the Chronographic and History of the Whole World, and all the principal Kingdoms and Isles thereof.” London, 1652.

1769, and by Father Tieffentaller. One Bartholomew Plaisted visited Assam about 1750 and has left a characteristic travellers' tale about the province and its people in his *Journal from Calcutta to Bengal, etc., to England in the year MDCCCL*. Pædro Mæstro Sebastian Manrique who visited Arracan in 1628-29 makes occasional references to Assam or *Assaram* in his *Itinerario Oriental*.<sup>1</sup>

The French East India Company had a well-organised branch at Goalpara founded in 1755 by Monsieur Jean Baptiste Chevalier who was deputed from Chandernagore in Assam. for that object. On the capture of Chandernagore by the English during the Seven Years' War, 1756-63, "the trade on the part of the French Company with Assam was discontinued, and Monsieur Chevalier remained at Goalpara in the employ of some English gentlemen as their Agent for the salt trade with Assam." Chevalier who was a Knight of the Royal and Military Order of St. Louis lived to play a very important part in the commercial and political relations of the English and the French in Bengal. He became Governor of Chandernagore in 1769 and 'Commander-in-Chief for His Most Christian Majesty of the French Settlements in Bengal.' Dr. Wade refers to his unsuccessful voyage up the river Brahmaputra, which is generally corroborated by contemporary French records, from which we learn,— "On the day when Chandernagore fell, March 23, 1757, Chevalier was away to the king of Assam, and Courtin was anxiously expecting him at Dacca. This was not his first excursion into Assam. In 1755 he had penetrated into that country as far as Sylhet, and returning by way of Goalpara, he had founded in the latter place a factory which was not restored to the French in 1763," after the Treaty of Paris. Chevalier, who has been described as a "*fonctionnaire negociant* carrying on diplomatic negotiations on behalf of France in spite of France herself," aimed at the undoing of the English Company's power in Bengal. In August, 1778, he was seized at Cuttack by Alexander Elliott. The ambitious adventurer signed a *parole*, and was subsequently despatched to England as a war-prisoner in 1779.

Chevalier's Goalpara factory continued for several decades. His agent, one Konny Sircar went in 1767 to Malda where he meddled with "the English Company's weavers and Assamese," and had constant friction with Gour Mohan Seat, the manager of the Malda establishment of the English East India Company. After Chevalier's withdrawal from Goalpara in 1757 his agency was delivered to Mr. John Robinson. In 1767 Mr. Laval was appointed Monsieur Chevalier's partner to carry on a trade with Assam as agents of the English. There were several French merchants at Goalpara trading independently till 1778 when they were recalled down to Calcutta by order of Government.<sup>2</sup>

‡ *Bengal, Past and Present*, IV—page 603, VI—page 221, XIII—page 238, II—page 50.

These facts about the French Company's trade relations with Assam have been obtained from *Bengal: Past and Present*,—(a) Mr. Charuchandra Roy's *Note on J. B. Chevalier and Colonel Montigny*, XVI—pages 124-161; (b) Archdeacon Firminger's editorial notes, Chevalier as a fine field for original research, II—pages 390-417; enquiry into the nature and circumstances of the trade of the French East India Company, in Bengal, III—pages 363-370; (c) The Chandernagore Papers, list of French prisoners, VI—pages 21-28; Chevalier's letters to Warren Hastings during his imprisonment, 1778-9, IV—pages 421-439.

As we shall see later, Chevalier delivered to an Assamese merchant named Sibram Sarma Bairagi goods to the value of one lakh of rupees during his first stay in Goalpara in 1755-57. Another merchant, Jagannath Sarkar, had also traded with Chevalier's firm. More than twenty years after, in 1778, Chevalier's agents, Mr. Lear, Mr. Laval and Mr. Baillie negotiated with the Ahom government for the payment of the debt owed by Sibram and Jagannath. The activities of these merchants were intercepted by Warren Hastings.

A voluminous manuscript Assamese chronicle of the reign of Swargadeo Lakshmi Singha, 1769-80, in possession of the American Baptist Mission at Gauhati, makes frequent reference to the adventurous exploits of a number of European merchants in Assam, which materially agree with the records of the East India Company. The folios of the manuscript have been found in the most pell mell fashion, and I gave below the substance of the events in as chronological an order as possible, extracted from a large mass of details of other events recorded almost to a day:—

During the Jaintia expedition of the East India Company in 1696-7 *saka*, A. D. 1774,<sup>1</sup> the Ahom king deputed one Mayaram Kataki to watch and report on the movements of the belligerents. The king of Manipur had established friendly relations with the British by presenting to one of their commanders the princess who had been formerly brought to Assam.<sup>2</sup> The combined Manipuri and British forces succeeded in subduing the Jaintias. The allies further combined with Cachar and Jaintia, and Demera became their place of rendezvous. Reports reached the Ahom court that the combined armies had been planning an attack on Assam. The Ahom king sent four spies to ascertain the real facts. A week after, a messenger from Gauhati informed the Ahom monarch that the Firinghees had threatened the Assamese officer at the Candahar custom house with vengeance if the amount of Rs. 1,00,000 due to them from an Assamese trader named Sibram Sarma Bairagi were not paid within a month. The European merchants had detained an Ahom 'prince' in their custody as surety for the sum due from Assam. He was somehow rescued by the Assamese, but it transpired that the so-called prince was no other than one Fedela, the son of a retainer of the Barpatra Gohain. The names of the European merchants were Leor (Mr. Lear), Lawal (Mr. Laval), Beli (Mr. Baillie), and the firm on whose behalf they came to Assam for the recovery of debts belonged to Muse-Chabaliya (Monsieur Chevalier)

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<sup>1</sup>For the Jaintia expedition of the East India Company under Captain Elliker, during the Collectorship at Sylhet of W. M. Thackeray, the novelist's grandfather, see Bradley-Birt's *Sylhet Thackeray*, Chapter 7.

<sup>2</sup>I believe this is the Manipuri princess Kuranga-nayani, presented by her father Jay Singha Karta-Maharaj to Swargadeo Rajeswar Singha, 1751-69. After her chivalrous assassination of Raghav Maran Barbarua we do not hear any more of her except in this connection.

who had personally traded in Assam before.<sup>1</sup> The merchants pressed for the payment of at least seven-tenths of their dues, and in default thereof they demanded the surrender of the country as far as Kaliabar, the only consequence of non-compliance being immediate war. The merchants came with one ship, and fifteen *bajras* or boats. They reached Nagarbera, and in April 1778, they seized the persons of Rudraram Bairagi, son of the defaulting merchant Sibram, Narayan Katakai, Bika Kakati, Niramay Bara and Gelai Duaria ; the captives were shut up in a boat under lock and key. The merchants then advanced up to Pandu, where they caused panic among the neighbouring population, and were alleged to have cut forcibly bamboos in the compound of the Abhaypuria Rajkhowa. The Barphukan or the Ahom viceroy at Gauhati was censured by the king for his inability to stem the advance of the merchants. King Lakshmi Singha, intending to gain time, asked the Barphukan to send a message to the merchants to the following effect :—

“The merchants have alleged that the Assamese officer at Candahar-chowki has refused to permit them to trade in Assam. On commercial questions the Cholahdara Phukan<sup>2</sup> is the properly constituted authority ; the merchants should negotiate with that officer for the redress of their grievances. If that Phukan comes to know that they have crossed the *chowkies* without passports, he will be certainly angry with them. The king has placed the Bara-Nawab Barphukan at Gauhati to convert enemies into friends ; he has also been supplied with forces and arms. If he hears of their offensive movements their fate will be certainly disastrous. Besides if we inform their Burra-Saheb of their activities in Assam the consequences will not be pleasant to them. The amount which they allege is due to Muse-Chabaliya had accrued when that merchant came here over twenty years ago. How can they now claim this superannuated balance ? The whole matter will be properly enquired into by the Cholahdara Phukan, and the merchants will be informed of his decision in due course.”

An agent of the merchants then visited the Ahom court ; he was given royal audience with due ceremony, and a letter written in Persian was handed over to the agent to be delivered to his master. The Barphukan was secretly instructed to press the European traders at Pandu and Nagarbera to go back to Bengal. They refused, and demanded permission to trade in Assam, and to recover the dues from Sibram and Jagannath. Rudraram undertook to see to the payment of his father's debts, while the whereabouts of Jagannath Sarkar, who was evidently a Bengali merchant, could not be traced.

<sup>1</sup> Lear was the English merchant of Goalpara whose alarming activities in Assam formed the subject matter of Hasting's letter to Purling, *poste* Mr. Laval on termination of his partnership with Chevalier traded on his own account till 1778 when he was recalled to Calcutta with the French merchants of Goalpara—Letter from Mr. Taylor, 6th May 1784, *Bengal Past and Present*, III—pages 366-367. Mr. Hugh Baillie was the Company's resident at Rangamati then a salt farmer, and afterwards Collector of Rungpoor in 1789.—Glazier's Report on Rungpoor, 1873. The Assamese corruption of Monsieur Chevalier's name into *Muse-Chabaliya* or *Musecha-baniya* can be easily explained, *baniya* being the usual appellation at the end of a merchant's name ; as *Ramdhan Baniya*, which means *Ramdhan the trader*.

<sup>2</sup> Cholahdara Phukan was the master of the king's robes, but the custom was to entrust additional portfolios to ministers in old Assam ; as it appears from the present context, the Cholahdara Phukan's office was equivalent to that of a Minister of Commerce.

The sequel to these negotiations is not to be found in our chronicle. Mr. Lear had probably to retire from Assam in obedience to Warren Hastings' order communicated through Mr. Purling, Collector of Rungpoor. Fresh hostilities broke out with the French in 1778, and English merchants could no longer act as representatives of an alien firm. The services of Mr. Lear, as we shall see, were requisitioned to check the activities of two French merchants of Goalpara, Giblot and Champanac.

The facts relating to Mr. Lear's enterprises in Assam have been corroborated in a letter, dated November 7, 1778, addressed by Warren Hastings to Mr. Purling, Collector of Rungpoor,—

Warren  
letter.

Hastings'

sed by Warren Hastings to Mr. Purling, Collector of Rungpoor,—

“I learn from report that Mr. Lear, in order to recover some outstanding balance, has engaged in hostilities with the people (of Assam) and actually marched an armed force into their country. I am very desirous of knowing the truth of this report, and therefore request you will inform yourself minutely of every circumstance concerning it, and transmit to me the account of it, that I may either bring it before the Board, or take such other steps as may be proper. In the meantime, should Mr. Lear be actually engaged in any measures the consequences of which may appear to you alarming, I recommend it to you to check them immediately. I understand that Goalpara is under Dacca, and it may therefore be necessary to correspond with Mr. Shakespeare on the subject.”<sup>1</sup>

Regarding this letter of Warren Hastings, Archdeacon Firminger commented in the editorial columns of *Bengal: Past and Present*, IV—page 630,—“No answer to this request for information can be found among the records of the Home Department, but the letter is valuable because it belongs to that horizon of statesmanship which lay far beyond the ken of Hastings' official foes.”

But, who was this Mr. Lear? In a letter, dated May 16, 1763, Mr. Hugh Watts requested the permission of the Governor and Council that Mr. George Lear might be allowed to reside at Rungpoor as his agent.

Mr. George Lear. Later on Mr. Lear established an independent salt factory at Goalpara where he had a residence. Mr. Lear's commercial activities which were carried on independently of the East India Company were regarded as a violation of the monopoly hitherto enjoyed and exercised by the latter. The words of Mr. Glazier may be quoted,—

“With regard to the Assam trade, the Company ever and anon spread consternation in the merchant camp by pressing out the trade as a monopoly ..... The Assam Government was in its last state of decrepitude. The brahmanising of the country had deprived the people of that fierce courage which had spread terror among the Muhammadans. There were constantly laid charges against the merchants for making raids into the country for recovery of their dues; the charges were in a great measure exaggerated, got up by one merchant against another, but ‘vagrant, topasses or Portuguese soldiers’ adventurers from North-West, Sikhs and others, who congregated here, afforded ready materials for such

<sup>1</sup> A Report on the District of Rungpoor, by E. G. Glazier, 1873, page 44. This remarkable corroboration also testifies to the accuracy of Assamese *buranjis* or chronicles.

expeditions. Mr. Lear's hostilities with Assam in 1778, *vide* Mr. Hastings' letter, is one case in point; and on two occasions in 1782 and 1791, charges were brought against Rausch of having invaded Assam."

Mr. Rausch and Mr. Lear were associated with the capture of two French merchants, Giblot and Champanac. On the renewal of Anglo-French hostilities in 1778, the two French factors of Goalpara were away from that place, most probably in Assam, and Mr. Rausch persuaded them to return to their headquarters. Mr. Lear seized their persons at his own house at Goalpara, and sent them down as prisoners to the British settlement at Dacca. The two alien captives appealed on September 12, 1778, to the President and Gentlemen of the English Settlement at Dacca to permit them to recover the balance due to them, "and to collect, if not all, at least some of the wrecks of our fortune, and grant permission to one of us to remove some goods now detained in a warehouse at Goalpara." The names of Giblot and Champanac figure in a list of Frenchmen confined in the Dacca jail in February, 1781. They were merchants of considerable rank, and their names appear in the list of leading citizens of Chandernagore, several years previously to their arrest at Goalpara. They were subsequently taken to Calcutta, from where they were despatched to England in a high class vessel as war-prisoners.

The adventures of the French merchants, Chevallier, Giblot and Champanac, who were so closely connected with the Assam trade, are not generally known, but one would come across them in the Pondicherry and Chandernagore records. Monsieur Chevallier has himself recorded his experiences in his *Memoire sur les Quatre Circars*, which is preserved till now in Paris archives, while in Mr. S. C. Hill's *Three Frenchmen in Bengal* we have a detailed account of Chevallier's peregrinations with his compatriot Courtin.

The first official recognition of the possibilities of opening trade relations with Assam on the part of the East India Company was published in the *Calcutta Gazette* of August 21, 1788, where we read,—

"The commercial treaty just concluded between this Government and the Nabob Vizier appears to be founded on the most enlightened principles of commerce, and these at the same time plain and simple to the lowest trader. Every obstruction to a ready intercourse is removed and there can be no doubt that trade will flourish again between the two kingdoms. From the adoption of such liberal plans we may expect to see new channels of wealth and commerce opened with the neighbouring countries Nepal, Tibet and Assam."

Four years after this notice the East India Company came in direct contact with the Assamese people through Captain Welsh's expedition, and therefore from the year 1792 we can reasonably calculate the discovery of Assam to the East India Company, who thenceforward began to take a continually growing interest in the resources and the



condition of this secluded province. In a letter, dated December 10, 1792, Lord Cornwallis penned the following lines to the Right Honourable Henry Dundas, afterwards Lord Melville, President of the Court of Directors :—

“As Mr. Francis, or some such candid person, may represent our interference in the affairs of Assam as a continuation of Lord Cornwallis’ letter our spirit of ambitious conquest and as a cruel interruption of the tranquillity which that happy nation has hitherto enjoyed, I send you a copy of a letter which I have received from Captain Welsh containing a plain narrative of what have passed and of the state of the country as far as it has come to his knowledge. Our information respecting Assam is too imperfect to send a satisfactory account in a public letter to the Court of Directors’, but I hope to write fully on the subject in the course of next month. Welsh is an honourable and worthy fellow, and will do no wrong.”<sup>1</sup>

This necessary desire of the supreme head of the Government of the Honourable John Company in India was embodied in a minute by the Governor-General to Captain Welsh, —

“However extraordinary it may appear to people in Europe we are under the necessity of admitting that owing to the unremitting jealousy which the chiefs of these countries have hitherto shown to the English, we know little more of the interior parts of Nepal and Assam than of the interior parts of China, and I therefore think that no pains should be spared to avail ourselves of so favourable an opportunity to obtain good surveys and to acquire every information that may be possible both of the population, and of the manners and customs of the inhabitants, as well as the trade and manufactures and natural productions of countries with which it must even be our interest to maintain the most friendly communication.”<sup>2</sup>

The official desire to collect information about Assam was carried out by Captain Welsh himself ; and in a most scholarly and laborious manner by Doctor John Peter Wade who was the medical officer in charge of the expedition. Captain Welsh himself wrote lengthy despatches to the Imperial headquarters describing the condition of the country. His most monumental work on Assam is however his replies to a series of questions put by the India Government on the social and political condition of Assam. These questions and replies together with the supplementary comments of David Scott have been fortunately printed in Sir Alexander Mackenzie’s *North-East Frontier of Bengal*. This precious document deals with the constitution of the Ahom Government, the source of discontent and disaffection prevailing then in Assam, the political relations of the king of Assam with neighbouring chieftains, the productions and actual

<sup>1</sup> Extract from the Cornwallis correspondence, Volume II, edited by Charles Ross, Esq., pages 185-186. The letter referred to is not printed in the volume, and the editor explains the omission as follows :— “The letter from Captain Welsh is long and not worth reproduction ; the substance of it is to describe the state of the country torn to pieces by contending factions, which gave full scope to the horrors which barbarians inflict upon the inhabitants of the state which is the scene of struggles for power.” Colonel Thomas Welsh died on April 11, 1822.

<sup>2</sup> Captain Welsh’s Expedition to Assam, by Lieutenant-Colonel James Johnstone, 1912, page 11.

commerce of Assam. The political wisdom of Captain Welsh is manifested in his prediction regarding the fulfilment of any stipulations that might be settled between the king of Assam and the East India Company. The eighth question stands as follows :—

“Whether from your knowledge of the Assam Rajah’s character, you are of opinion, that after return of the detachment he will observe the stipulation he has entered into, or may further agree to.”

Welsh’s misgivings. The prophetic soldier replied as follows :—

“From our knowledge of the Rajah’s character and the views of many individuals in power and favour, whose personal interests are affected by the stipulations enforced into with him, I am decidedly of opinion that none would be observed, supposing the detachment and all control on the part of the British Government is withdrawn.”

The remarks of David Scott on this passage written more than thirty years after bear testimony to the justice of Captain Welsh’s misgivings,—

“The opinion was completely verified by the result. On the detachment being withdrawn, the Rajah ceased to observe the commercial treaty and a virtual monopoly was again established.”

The Imperial Record Department of the Government of India lent for the purpose of exhibition at the fifth meeting of the Indian Historical Records Commission, held at Calcutta in January 1923, a manuscript document containing “An interesting account of the ancient system of Government in Assam, its political and religious conditions and commercial aspects. (Pol. Con. 24 Feb. 1794, No.3-A.)” We have been told in the *Hand book to the Records of the Government of India*, page 62, that this document is the same as the one printed in Sir Alexander Mackenzie’s book above referred to.

The more sustained work on the history and commerce of Assam was however undertaken by Captain Welsh’s collaborator Dr. J. P. Wade. He compiled an *Account of Assam* from materials obtained from indigenous sources and finished the work at Kissengunj, Bengal, in March, 1800.<sup>1</sup> Doctor Wade to supplement his history wrote also an elaborate *Geographical Sketch of Assam* dealing with the divisions, rivers, towns and productions of the province. The two above manuscripts were deposited in the India Office Library, London ; a fragment of the geography was however published in the *Asiatic Annual Register* for 1805. Dr. Wade further compiled a monograph on the reign of Gaurinath Singha, 1780-1795, at whose request the expedition of Captain Welsh was undertaken. Dr. Wade refers to this monograph in the prefaces of his history and geography of Assam, as having been sent to Europe in 1796 for publication with the approbation of Lord Teignmouth ; but no trace could be had of this book, which would have been highly valuable as coming from the pen of a western

<sup>1</sup> For further information, *vide* the present writer’s review of Doctor Wade’s history of Assam in the *Cotton College Magazine*, January 1925. The history has been printed through the enterprise of Messrs. Benudhar Sarma and Rameswar Sarma. Dr. Wade was also the author of *Prevention and treatment of the Disorders of Seamen and Soldiers of Bengal* published in 1793.

scholar who was also an eyewitness of many of the events of the reign of that Assamese monarch<sup>1</sup>.

Doctor J. P. Wade mentions in his *Geographical Sketch of Assam* that "strangers of every description and country were scrupulously denied admission into Assam". He refers to a European who attended the Mogul Army and was taken prisoner and conducted to the capital and afterwards liberated. Dr. Wade had sufficient reason to believe that the unfortunate European was a native of Holland who published subsequently some account of his involuntary visit to the court of the Ahom monarch<sup>2</sup>. Dr. Wade further refers to a second traveller who was a Frenchman, "whose name will not easily be erased from the memory of many gentlemen of property in Bengal, Chevalier, who at a later period obtained the Government of Chandernagor, embarked a considerable property, it is said, at Dacca on a fleet of boats and proceeded to the confines of Assam. Permission was obtained from court and he advanced with his fleet as far as the capitals, Rangpur and Gargaon, under an escort, which deprived him of all intercourse with the Natives, and confines his personal observations within the limits of his barge. At length he obtained his liberty by a stratagem, and has left some information relative to the geography of the country, or more probably of the banks of the river which lay in his course."<sup>3</sup>

Dr. Wade refers further to Major Rennel's map of Assam and to the map of the course of the Brahmaputra prepared by Mr. Wood, of the Corps of Engineers. The English translation of a Persian tract relating to Assam, by Mr. Vansittart published in the *Asiatick Researches* has also been mentioned by Dr. Wade. He concludes by saying,—

"As far as my sources of information extend, these are the only public documents which exist on the subject of Assam."

Captain Welsh's expedition to Assam ended in the conclusion of a treaty with King Gaurinath Singha on February 20, 1793. The Assam Raja "highly sensible of the benefit he has experienced from the aid which has been afforded to him by the English Government, and desirous not only of cementing the harmony and friendship which subsist between him and that power, but also of extending the beneficial effects thereof, in general, to the subjects of Bengal and Assam, has, at the recommendation of Captain Welsh, the representative at his court of the said English Government, agreed to abolish the injudicious system of commerce which has heretofore been pursued." The

<sup>1</sup> On being requested by the present writer to supply any clue that might lead to the discovery of Dr. Wade's monograph on Gaurinath Singha, the authorities of the India Office, the Royal Asiatic Society, the Asiatic Society of Bengal, the British Museum, the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and the Cambridge University Library have expressed their inability to find any clue whatsoever.

<sup>2</sup> Evidently this soldier is the hero of Glanius' "Unfortunate Voyage into the Kingdom of Bengala", 1682; a synopsis of this book relating to Mr. Jumla's invasion of Assam was published in *B. P. P.* for January to March 1925.

<sup>3</sup> Monsr. Chevalier's account of Assam is probably to be found in his *Memoires sur les Quatre Circars*, now in existence in Paris archives,—Affaires Etrangères—Asia, memories at Documents, 1687-1810, volume IV, page 247, also Marine 1778, B—4, volume 150 According to Mr. Charuchandra Roy, *B. P. P.*, XVI, the French records of Chandernagore and Pondicherry contain accounts of Chevalier's extensive commercial activities in Assam, Bengal and Patna.

treaty provided for "a reciprocal and entire liberty of commerce between the subjects of Bengal and those of Assam." But we learn "that the Government never ratified or published the treaty on the ground that the Raja's Government was not sufficiently strong to ensure its operation".

In the Imperial Record Department of the Government of India, there is a manuscript 'agreement with Raja Surgadeo of Assam, requiring him to defray the expenses of the East India Company's troops serving in Assam, bearing the seals of the Raja and his Minister the Bura Fogan (Pol. Con. 24 February 1794, No. 16)." It is worth while to investigate and bring to light the terms of this hitherto unknown treaty.

The growing facilities of trade between Assam and Bengal placed the two countries in nearer relations than before. There was a brisk interchange of exports and imports. Merchandise exported into Assam from Bengal had to be escorted by burkendazes and armed men, but they took advantage of the slack government of the country and "committed every species of outrage upon the defenceless inhabitants." *The Calcutta Gazette* of January 1, 1795, issued a Political Department Notice, dated December 17, 1794, over the signature of J. H. Harington, Sub-Secretary, to the following effect:—

"That all persons desirous of sending escorts of burkendazes or other armed men with merchandise in to Assam are to apply for passports from the Commissioner of Cooch Behar specifying in their applications the number of escort, the goods under their charge, the owner of them and the place to which it is intended to carry them. Without such passports, no armed man of any description will be allowed to pass into Assam from the Company's provinces under the pretence of escorting merchandise or otherwise."

All this will tend to prove the intimate relations between the Company and Assam, and since the last few years of the eighteenth century the annual despatch of the East India Company to the Court of Directors at Home included a report on the province of Assam. The first volume of *Selections from the Unpublished Records of Government* by the Reverend J. A. Long, member of the Government Records Commission, contains a "Report relative to Assam in 1797, made by the Persian Translator."<sup>2</sup> This is preceded by a "Memorandum of Proceedings regarding Assam about 1792." The last paragraph of the reports offers a faithful picture of Assam and of the desire of the authorities of the East India Company to stabilise commercial relations with it—

"The country of Assam is represented as abounding in the most valuable products, and it were therefore an object of public interest to take measures for restoring it to peace and quiet, with the view to promote the intercourse of commerce, now so much impeded by the depredations that the defenceless state of the inhabitants and the

<sup>1</sup>—A Collection of *Treaties, Engagements, and Sunnuds* relative to India and Neighbouring Countries, Volume I, page 127.

<sup>2</sup>—This Persian Translation was no other than the distinguished Neil Benjamin Edmonstone.

barbarism of the Government subject it to. By all accounts they are a very peaceable and an industrious people, and if not molested by these annual marauders would in a short time bring the country into a flourishing state: whilst the trade, if laid under proper restrictions which should secure them from imposition and violence, would, in all probability, become very extensive and beneficial by creating a demand for articles, the produce of Europe and Bengal, and supplying this country and Europe with a valuable return in bullion and other products of the country."

Marauders in Assam.

But who were these annual marauders? They are very well described in the same

report,—

"These banditti are represented to be a set of vagabonds and dacoits, who having or choosing no means of subsistence but by plunder, rally under the standard of any one who has influence enough to collect them, and forming themselves into parties in the neighbourhood of Assam towards the close of the rains, take advantage of the fall of the waters to enter the country, where they oblige the Rajah or his officers to entertain them as sepoys upon their own terms by threatening to overrun the country if refused, and when entertained they act wholly without subordination and commit every species of outrage upon the defenceless inhabitants. By late accounts from Goalpara it appears that there is at this moment a large body of men assembled under one Kunnock Singh, which only waits the fall of the Burmopooter to march into Assam. The enormities committed by these people are represented as shocking to humanity; rapine and murder are practised without control; the country is deserted; wherever they appear, cultivation is impeded and commerce almost wholly at a stand."

The influence with these *burkendazes* or gangs of marauding adventurers exercised in the history of Assam will be evident from the fact that one Hazari Singh assumed great political influence at Gauhati with the help of his armed men. He conferred the viceroyship of Gauhati on Badan Chandra, on the latter's payment of sixty thousand rupees. Being pressed for money Badan Chandra was compelled to take possession of the gold and silver vessels of the Kamakhya and Hajo temples. Another body of *burkendazes* under one Niamatulla Subadar occupied Gauhati later on. Hazari Singh offered him resistance but he died fighting in the battle.<sup>1</sup> The other *burkendaz* leaders, Baju Singh, Alo Singh, Nathu Singh, Mangal Singh, Chaitanya Singh and Udai Singh, are still remembered by the Assamese people for their association, with the political events of the time. The Ahom Rajah himself maintained a mercenary force of these *burkendazes* organised on the military system of the East India Company. The indigenous Assamese soldiers were also remodelled on similar lines.

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<sup>1</sup>These facts are taken from a manuscript chronicle of Assam compiled in 1803 by Srinath Duara Barbarua.

Speaking of the growing trade relations between Assam and Bengali mention should be made of the articles of export and import. Captain Welsh's treaty with Swargadeo Gaurinath Singha, of February 1793, aimed at "a reciprocal and entire liberty of commerce between the subjects of Bengal and those of Assam, for all the singular goods and merchandizes": and the subjects of Bengal were "permitted to proceed with their boats loaded with merchandizes into Assam and to expose their goods for sale". A regular impost was levied on all commodities of export and import. The articles imported into Assam were chiefly the salt of Bengal and the "broad cloths of Europe, the cotton cloths of Bengal, carpets, copper, lead, tin, totanag, pearls, hardware, jewellery, spices"; which were all subjected to an impost of ten per cent. on the invoice price. Assam was also allowed to import war-like implements and military stores which were not declared as contraband and which were required for the Company's troops stationed in Assam. The articles of export from Assam were also liable to a duty of ten per cent. and the chief of them were the following,—*Mooga dhuties* or *thans*, *mooga* thread, pepper, elephant's teeth, cutna lac, chuprah and jurilal, munjeet and cotton. Merchants were allowed in certain cases to pay their duties in money or kind. The treaty also provided for the transmission of paddy or rice to Bengal or Assam in cases of temporary scarcity, when no duties were to be paid on the grain despatched. Provisions were also made for the establishment of custom houses at Gauhati and Candahar Chowki where authorised agents were stationed, their duties being to collect the fees, and to examine all boats passing up and down the river, and to grant the merchant concerned a passport specifying the number and quantity of each article.

Some fifteen years after the conclusion of the above treaty Buchanan-Hamilton collected the following statistics of the volume of, trade between the two provinces:—

"The Balance of Trade with Bengal amounted in 1808-1809 to exports from Assam, Rs.1,50,900; and imports from Bengal amounted to Rs.2,2,8,300. The balance was paid by Assam in gold and silver."

The chief article for which Assam was dependent upon foreign supply was salt, though there was a salt mine in the district of Sadiya which was worked under the superintendence of an officer named Mohong-hat Borua. It was brought to the Ahom capital in the joints of large bamboos. It was purer than the Bengal salt, but its price was considerably higher. The indigenous supply was insufficient and Assam had to depend upon Bengal. Long before Captain Welsh's treaty with Gaurinath Singha there were several emporiums of salt at Goalpara on the boundary between Assam and Bengal under the management of Daniel Rausch and others.

Besides Gauhati and Candahar or Hãdirachowki, the Assam Government also maintained custom houses at several places to control the trade with neighbouring tribes. At Salalpath, in the district of Darrang, duties were levied on all goods passing between Kamrup and

Upper Assam under the management of a Barua at rupees six thousand a year. The duties at the latter place consisted of the fee of four annas on each of the six thousand paiks sent from Darrang to work for the Assam Raja, of a hoe and some rice which each of them paid in addition. The trade with Bhutan was regulated from the custom house at Simliabar which was situated at a distance of one day's journey north from the headquarters of the Darrang Raja. The custom house was in charge of a hereditary officer known as the Wazir Barua. The Bhutiya traders were also allowed to bring their goods to Hajo, which they visited every winter as a pilgrimage sacred to them for its alleged association with their Mahamuni or Buddha. The imports from Bhutan were woollen cloth, gold dust, salt, musk, horses, chamar or cow tails and Chinese silk, the exports from Assam being lac, mooga-silk, and cloth, endi silk and dry fish. The Garos served as intermediate links connecting the trade between Assam and the Surma Valley. They brought salt from Sylhet and cotton from their own hills.

The most remarkable figure in the Assam-Bengal trade relations during the latter half of the eighteenth century was evidently Daniel Rausch<sup>1</sup> who had settled at Goalpara as a farmer of the salt revenue of the district since 1768. He has been described in a contemporary list of Europeans who were not "covenanted servants of the Honourable Company, residing in the district of Rungpoor," as a German agent for Mr. David Killicen at Goalpara, having no special commission. Elsewhere he has been called a Dane, who came to India in 1766. During the period of unrest and disorder in the reign of Gaurinath Singha, 1780-1795, and Kamaleswar Singha, 1795-1810, local potentates and leaders asserted their independence aided by mercenaries and the fugitives from neighbouring countries. Two influential Choudhuries of Kamrup, Haradatta and Biradatta, placed themselves at the head of the Dumdumias and rebelled against the authority of the Ahom monarch. The activities of Mr. Rausch were misunderstood and he was murdered by the Dumdumias, sometime in January 1796, Sir James Johnstone, the chronicler of Captain Welsh's expedition to Assam is of opinion that Mr. Rausch was murdered by the Darrang Raja whom he had visited in the hope of obtaining compensation for property destroyed at Gauhati.

Mr. Glazier in his admirable Report on the district of Rungpoor states that "charges were brought against Rausch of having invaded Assam, and it was said he had taken the Rajah prisoner, killed many persons, and carried off property to the value of rupees ten or twelve lacs" The *Calcutta Gazette* of February 4, 1796, published the following extract of a letter from Dinajpur:—

"We have just heard of Mr. Rausch of Goalpara, having been cut off in the country of Assam where he had lately gone on a mercantile concern. This respectable merchant as well as good man was formerly an officer under the Great Frederick of Prussia and was wounded in the famous battle of Minden. He had resided above twenty-five years past at Goalpara and Jugighopah."

<sup>1</sup> Pausch married on July 19, 1782, one Martha Mayo, spinster, at Rungpoor, the services being conducted by Mr. Goodlad, Collector Johan and Daniel, the twin children of this marriage, born on June 24, 1783, are buried at Goalpara. B; P. P., IV, page 511.

The Ahom Government established a custom house at Hadirachowki opposite Goalpara which was placed in charge of the Duaria Barua. Every boat carrying merchandise from Bengal was examined at this depôt and the customary fees realised. In fact, no boat could enter the boundary of Assam without the permission of the Duaria Barua, and David Scott, Commissioner of Rungpoor, himself had once to wait for a couple of days before he could ply his fleet into the Assam waters.

The growing contact of Assam with the East India Company led to the adoption in Assam of several measures and reforms on the model of the Honourable East India Company. In 1803, the Ahom king sent an envoy to the British Governor-General with the request to lend him soldiers, guns, gunpowder and balls. An unknown chronicler of the East India Company goes so far as to state that "the use of firearms, till Captain Welsh's deputation, appears to have been utterly unknown amongst them. Captain Welsh at the Rajah's request allowed a few sepoy to instruct some of his people in the use of the firelock."<sup>1</sup> King Kamaleswar Singha had his coins struck at Calcutta in the mint of the East India Company.<sup>2</sup>

Assam had during the last decade of the eighteenth century two very powerful and far-sighted officers. The first was Purnananda Buragohain, the prime minister, who was chiefly responsible for introducing the reforms on the lines of the Company. It was he who met Captain Welsh as the plenipotentiary of the Ahom Government and settled the terms of the treaty. He managed to suppress all local disturbances and restored the country to quiet and order. The other was Kaliabhomora Pratapballabh Barphukan, the Ahom Viceroy of Lower Assam, who distinguished himself by suppressing the rebellion of the Dumdumias, and established cordial relations between Assam and the East India Company. The Barphukan had realised that a frontier Province like Assam, surrounded by ferocious hill tribes in the neighbourhood with unrestricted opportunities for the migration of the riffraff from adjacent territories, needed alliance with a powerful Government to protect it in emergencies where its limited resources were important to act effectively. It was this far-sighted political wisdom which drove Kumar Bhaskara-varma, king of Kamarupa during the early year of the seventh century to solicit the friendship of Harshavardhana, Emperor of Northern India. Kaliobhomora Barphukan, accordingly sent up proposals to the Ahom king to the effect that the Governor-General of British India should be persuaded to extend to Assam the protection of his powerful arm by incorporating it within the fold of the territories of the Honourable Company. The Barphukan's proposal aimed at converting

<sup>1</sup> Selection from the Records of the Government of India, Volume I, page 525. The Company's chronicler was wrong in his statement that firearms were unknown in Assam before Captain Welsh's expedition. We have substantial evidence to show that they were extensively used in the military operations of the pre-Welsh period. Hundreds of cannon are lying scattered in Assam with inscriptions showing that they were made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, if not earlier. Tavernier even state that gunpowder was first invented in Assam.

<sup>2</sup> Manuscript Assam Buranji compiled in 1803 by Srinath Duara Barbarua.



Assam into a feudatory state of the British Government. The premier Purnananda Burgohain apprehended that the measure would be an unpopular one in Assam. He had great confidence in himself and thought he would be able to introduce all necessary reforms and avert all possibilities of future disorder and at the same time maintain the absolute independence of the province. So the Barphukan's proposal did not meet the support of the Ahom Government<sup>1</sup>. The acceptance of the Barphukan's proposal would have placed Assam under the protection of the Company thirty years earlier than the Treaty of Yandaboo. Whatever might have been the effect of this earlier union, one thing can be said that Assam would have been saved from the vandalism of the Burmese followers of Mingimaha Bandula which reduced the country to a desert, and swept away all vestiges of peace and prosperity.

Now turning again to the records relative to Assam we should not forget the contributions published in the pages of *Asiatick Researches*. *Asiatick Researches*. Assam was still an unexplored region from the historical point of view and any communication relating to the province was welcomed in the pages of the journal. Dr. Wade was himself an active member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Mr. Vansittart translated into English those pages of the *Alamgir-nama* which described Assam and its people. The Garos, one of the Assam Hill tribes formed the subject of a lengthy article. In volumes XVI and XVII of the *Asiatick Researches*, Captain J. B. Neufville and Lieutenant R. Wilcox contributed two articles on the geography and population of Assam and on Assam and the neighbouring countries respectively.

Scattered in the pages of *Bengal: Past and Present*, we have glimpses here and there of some of the personalities and events of the earlier period of the British connection with Assam. The editor of the first sixteen volumes was the Venerable Archdeacon Walter K. Firminger who lived at Shillong for some time in 1909-1910 as its Chaplain. He was greatly interested in Assam records. In his editorial notes as well as in the articles of other contributors an attempt was made to evoke interests in the following persons, places and topics of Anglo-Assamese relations,—

Daniel Rausch, III, page 369 ; IV, page 511.

George Lear, III, page 369 ; IV, page 629.

Chevalier at Goalpara and Assam, III, pages 363-70 ; IV, 421-39 ; XVI, pages 124-61.

Arrest of Giblot and Champanac, III, page 369.

Jogighopa graveyard, picture, IV, page 629.

Biswanath graveyard, IV, page 608-9.

Rangamati, VI, pages 212, 221.

Murder of Bedingfield and Burlton, XI, page 106.

Ensign George Ewan John Law, III, page 372.

David Scott, V, page 206.

The Nazira tomb of William Robinson, III, page 374n.

<sup>1</sup>Assam Burauji by Gunabhiram Barua, 4th Edition 1900, Pages 171-172.

Rev. Robert Bland and Bishop Cotton in Assam, III, page 374.

Francis Jenkins, XVI, page 30.

Shah Jalal's tomb at Sylhet, picture, V, page 370.

That a systematic attempt has not been made to publish in the same journal more facts and records relating to Assam can be attributed to the meagre interest which has been taken in them<sup>1</sup>.

India has not known a more voluminous and laborious compiler than Buchanan-Hamilton. Dr. Francis Buchanan, commonly known as Buchanan-Hamilton, the latter title being adopted by him in accordance with the terms of the entail under which the estate of his mother Elizabeth Hamilton passed into the hands of the Buchanans. An M. A. at the age of seventeen, and M. D. at twenty-two, he entered the Indian Medical Service in 1794. He was appointed to accompany the embassy of Captain Symes to Burma and of Captain Knox to Nepal. For seven years, 1807-1814, he has appointed by the Court of Directors in a —

“Survey of the territories subject to the immediate authority of the Presidency of Fort William. The subjects of enquiry were most multifarious. The declared objects were to collect information upon the general topography of each district, the condition of the inhabitants, their religious customs, the natural productions of the country, fisheries, forests, mines and quarries; the state of agriculture, the condition of the landed property and tenures; the progress made in the arts, in the manufactures; the operations of commerce and every particular that can be regarded as forming an element in the prosperity and the depression of the people”<sup>2</sup>.

Though strictly Assam was outside the pale of Doctor Buchanan's investigations, he appended to his Survey of Rung- Buchanan-Hamilton's poor, a *Desultory Notice of Assam*. Dr. Buchanan's Survey of Assam. account of Assam, though termed ‘desultory’ by its eminent compiler presents a faithful picture of the country during the decadence of Ahom supremacy. Dr. Buchanan enumerates the various productions of Assam, and gives a rapid survey of the numerous divisions of the country including the tracts occupied by preliterate tribes. He also records his observations on the machinery of the Ahom Government. This is what he says about the infliction of punishments for criminal offences—

“The capital offences are for treason, murder, rape, arson voluntary abortion. Rebels are never excused; for other offences pardon may be purchased. Capital punishment extends to the whole family of a rebel, to his parents, brothers, sisters, wives and children. Offenders are put a death in various manners by cutting their throats by impaling them by grinding them between two wooden cylinders, by sawing them asunder between two planks, by beating them with hammers, and by applying burning hoes to different parts until they die. This is the most horrible. Except the gang from Bengal, there are few robbers and atrocious house breakers or pirates; such persons are punished in a summary manner by thrusting their eyes, or by cutting off

<sup>1</sup> I have been able to consult only the first 16 volumes of *Bengal: Past and Present*.

<sup>2</sup> Journal of the Behar and Orissa Research Society for March to June 1924; Page 26.

the knee-pans. The wretches usually die of the latter operation, but survive the former. Both punishments are inflicted by the sole order of the Chief Minister in Assam proper, or of the Governor of the two other provinces. Petty thefts are very common and are punished by whipping or by cutting off the noses and ears. The first punishment may legally be inflicted by any considerable officer such as a Rajah, or a Phukan, but the two latter could be inflicted by the Chief Judge of the district”.

We learn from Mr. (now Sir) Hugh McPherson's address in the annual meeting of the Behar and Orissa Research Society, held on March 15, 1924, that Buchanan's original manuscripts, embodying his laborious investigations extending over seven years and entailing upon the state an expenditure of £30,000 were transmitted to the Court of Directors in England in 1816, where they were lying till 1838, when Mr. Montgomery Martin was permitted to examine those manuscripts with a view to publish a digest or selection from them. The labours of Martin came out to the world in the shape of a voluminous compilation named *The History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India*. We are assured by Sir Hugh McPherson that Martin's eclecticism was based on his desire to reproduce only "the moral, political and commercial aspects of the Survey", and necessarily Martin cut out a great mass of matter which he considered to be irrelevant to the present position of affairs in the East. Sir Hugh McPherson examined the original manuscripts in the India Office during 1904-1905 and came upon a large mass of priceless documents which had been left out by Martin. Sir Hugh McPherson was compelled to observe that "their omission had done must injustice to Buchanan's reputation as an observer."<sup>1</sup>

McPherson's views regarding the valuable character of the voluminous relics of Buchanan's Survey drew the attention of the Government and the public and they have been published by McPherson himself in his Settlement Reports on Santal Purganas, while Buchanan's original surveys have been published *in extenso* in the *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*. We hope the day will not be far when some one interested in the history and antiquities of Assam will ransack Buchanan's valuable surveys and reveal to the world the treasures buried in them.<sup>2</sup> We have been assured by McPherson that they are bound to give us valuable information regarding the landed history, tribal traditions and social customs of the age.

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<sup>1</sup>. All students of E.I.C. records, including Beveridge, Sir David Prain, Jackson and Firminger believe that Martin had a very rudimentary idea of his duties as editor. According to W. J. Buchanan, "Martin used only those documents in which he was personally interested and omitted much he was not capable of appreciating." In the reprint of the proceedings of a libel case against Martin, published in B: P. P. VI. page 163n, the unscrupulous editor has been described as "the gentleman who published Buchanan-Hamilton's researches but with his own name on the title page."

<sup>2</sup>. Since the above lines were written, I have learnt from an India office letter of 2nd July 1925, addressed to Mr. B. Sarma that it has in its archives a manuscript copy of Buchanan's "General View of the history and Manners of Kamarupa."

It is gratifying to note that an orientalist of the erudition and eminence of Horace Hayman Wilson has connected

H. H. Wilson's account of the First Burmese War.

himself with the task of re-constructing to some extent the past history of Assam. James Mill left unfinished history of British India, and the last three volumes, covering the years from 1805 to 1835, had to

be written by H. H. Wilson who was also the editor of the previous six volumes. The chapters written by Wilson on the First Burmese War are illustrative of the author's encyclopædic knowledge and scholarship. As Assam was the pivotal point of the British conflict with Burma, Wilson's pages contain also a history of Assam of the years preceding the Treaty of Yandaboo. Fortunately for us, Wilson mentions in his footnotes, the voluminous mass of materials, mainly official records and reminiscences of the actual participators in the conflict, on which he based his succinct and authoritative account. He has thus placed before us information regarding various sources from which we can draw materials in order to reconstruct the history of Assam during that eventful and transitional period. Sir Archibald Campbell, who was one of the signatories of the Treaty of Yandaboo, and who was the virtual head of the British operations, submitted several despatches to the Government, and Wilson refers to them repeatedly, as well as to other official documents and narratives left by Lieutenant Pemberton, Captain Cox, Captain Crawford, Rev. Adoniram Judson, Lieutenant Fisher, Bayfield, Lieutenant Phayre, Colonel Symes and Charles Paton. It is extremely desirable that these contemporary accounts of the First Burmese War should be thoroughly examined by some scholar to sift from them materials for the history of Assam. Wilson's *Documents illustrative of the Burmese War*, published in 1827, will remain for ever an invaluable treasure for elucidating the history of the conflict which brought Assam to the light of the world.

The picture which the master orientalist has drawn of the Eastern Frontier of India is worth reproduction—

Wilson's account of Assam.

“The countries lying on the east and south-east of the British frontier of Bengal, from Assam to Arakan, a distance from north to south of about four hundred miles, were almost unknown at this period to European geography, having been hitherto closed against the inquiries of the Company's officers by their inherent physical deformities, the barbarous habits of the people, the jealousy of their chiefs, and the unwillingness of the Indian Government to sanction any enterprise of their servants, which might inspire doubts of their designs in the minds of the rulers of the adjacent regions. On the most northern portion of the boundary, the valley of Assam, watered by the converging branches of the Brahmaputra, was immediately contiguous to the province of Rungpoor, whence it stretched for three hundred and fifty miles in a north-easterly direction to snow-clad mountains separating it from China. Along its southern limits, a country of hill and forest, tenanted by a number of wild tribes, with whom no intercourse had ever been opened, spread towards the east, and in its central portion under the designation of Kachar, was conterminous on the west with the British district of Sylhet, and was bounded on the east by the mountain-girdled valley of Manipur.”

And again in a few sentences, Wilson gives us a correct picture of the political condition of Assam during the last phase of Ahom supremacy,—

“The rich valley of Assam had long been the scene of internal dissension, the inevitable consequence of the partition of authority among a number of petty chief, each of whom claimed, as his hereditary right a voice in the nomination of the Raja, and a share in the administration. Originally a Hindu principality, Assam had been subjugated in the 13th century by princes of the Shan race, and they had required the services of their chief adherents, by dividing with them the functions of the Government. Their principal ministers, termed Gohains, formed a council, without whose concurrence the Raja could issue no commands, nor was he legally enthroned until they had assented to his elevation. The Raja had the power of dismissing either of these individuals, but only in favour of some person of the same family. Officers of inferior rank, but equally claiming by title of inheritance, termed Phokans and Barwas, exercised various degrees of authority. The most important of them, styled the Bor Phokan, was the Governor of an extensive portion of Central Assam. The encroachments of this dignitaries on the ill-defined authority of the Raja, and his endeavours to free himself from their control generated a perpetual succession of domestic intrigues, which were not unfrequently fatal to all who were concerned in them.”

He then describes the circumstances that led to the invasion of Assam by the Burmese.

The services rendered by officers of the Honourable East India Company in bringing to the notice of the world informations regarding the hitherto obscure province of Assam can be better described in the eloquent words of Captain R. Boileau Pemberton, who himself has left us one of the most authoritative accounts of Assam during the early years of the nineteenth century in his *Report on the North-East Frontier of British India*, published in 1835—

“From the termination of the Burmese wars to be present period (1837) the spirit of enquiry has never slept, and the most strenuous exertions have been made by the officers employed on the Eastern Frontier to extend our geographical knowledge of countries scarcely known but by name, and to acquire some accurate information regarding the manners, customs, and languages of the various races of men by whom they are inhabited. The researches of Captains Bedford, Wilcox and Neufville and of Lieutenant Burlton in Assam dispelled the mist which had previously rested on the whole of the eastern portion of that magnificent valley; and the general direction and aspect of its mountain barriers, the courses and relative sizes of its mountains, or of the alluvial plains at their base, were then first made the subject of description and founded not on the vague reports of half-civilised savages but on the personal investigations of men, whose

scientific attainments enabled them to fix with precision the geographical site of every locality they visited”<sup>1</sup>.

In view of the light which the records of the East India Company are expected to throw on a dark period of Assamese history it is high time that arrangements should be made to examine, and classify them with a view to make them readily accessible to intending workers. The records of the Company are mainly deposited in the Imperial Record Department at Government Place, West, Calcutta, and facilities have since been opened for inspecting them. The Bengal Record Rooms, the India Office, the British Museum also possess a voluminous mass of the Company's records. The records of the Dutch, French and Portuguese East India Companies may also be advantageously inspected and examined in order to see whether they throw any light on any aspect of Assamese history, but for that purpose a knowledge of the three languages, Dutch, French and Portuguese will be essential. The records, wherever they are, are not mere dry-as-dust statements of facts and observations, but they contain incidental notices of the customs, institutions and productions of the country; they may also throw sufficient light on the careers of distinguished political pioneers. It is a matter of regret that we have no detailed and authoritative account of the lives of Captain Welsh and David Scott, the two virtual founders of the British connection with Assam, though we learn that the latter was fortunate to be immortalised in a *Memoir of David Scott Esquire* which we have not been able to trace.<sup>2</sup>

It may be mentioned here that the University of Calcutta very fittingly granted a Sir Rasbehari Ghosh Travelling Fellowship to Dr. Surendranath Sen, M.A., Ph. D., to proceed to London, Lisbon and Paris with the object of examining the factory records in the India Office and the records of the French and Dutch East India Companies for materials regarding the history of the Marathas.<sup>3</sup> Dr. Sen has now returned and has contributed numerous studies based on his investigations in Europe. Dr. Shafaat Ahmad Khan, Litt. D., Professor of Modern Indian History in the University of Allahabad, was engaged for several years in examining the records in the British Museum, the Public Record Office, the India Office and other British archives, and he has compiled an exhaustive bibliography of manuscripts on seventeenth century British India, preserved in the leading British archives. The Indian Historical Records Commission have made elaborate arrangements for the sifting and classification of the contents of the record

<sup>1</sup> “Abstract of the Journal of a Route travelled by Captain S. F. Hannay, from the Capital of Ava to the amber mines of the Hookong Valley on the south-east frontier of Assam”, by Captain R. B. Pemberton, published in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for April 1837. Mr. P. N. Bose, the Editor of the section on natural science in the Centenary Review of the Asiatic Society of Bengal from 1784-1883, wrote on page 82, — “War and conquest have done more than any other cause to extend geographical knowledge and widen the area of scientific investigation however they might be deplored on other grounds. . . . The breaking out of the war with Burma first furnished accurate information with regard to Assam and this Eastern Frontier”.

<sup>2</sup> Reference to a “Memoir of David Scott” was made in a footnote of the obituary notice of David Scott, published in the Asiatic Journal (vol. vii, 1832, part II, page 134) and in an anonymous article entitled ‘Assam since the expulsion of the Burmese’ published in the Calcutta Review, January to June 1853.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Calcutta University Syndicate for 1925, page 15.

rooms of India, and due emphasis has been attached to documents of historical importance including materials for social and economic history, and documents of personal and antiquarian interest. The Sub-Committee of the Commission, constituted of Professor L. F. Rushbrook Williams, Professor Jadunath Sarkar and Sir Henry Even Cotton were of opinion, "that no pre-Mutiny record of any class whatever should be destroyed unless its destruction is recommended by the standing Local Sub-Committee and approved by the Commission after such inspection as any other member of the Commission might wish to make." They also recommended that "such records as are weeded out should be handed over to learned societies or local Governments if they are willing to preserve them, in preference to the destruction of such records."<sup>1</sup> It may be further stated that several alumnies of Indian universities have compiled economic and industrial histories of India with the help of materials obtained from the East India Company records.

The relations of Assam with the Company were not of a long duration. They began in the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century and by the end of the first quarter of the next century, Assam became an integral part of the Company's territories. Assam continued to be under the East India Company up to 1858 when the whole of British India was placed under the Crown. Assam was still then a part of Bengal and a large mass of correspondence must be accumulated at the head offices at Calcutta, the Provincial and Imperial headquarters, and the India Office, London, the supreme headquarters of the Court of Directors of the East India Company. The records will primarily cover the period from 1775 to 1858. But we have detailed above instances of isolated visits of the servants of the East India Company and of other Europeans before 1775, some of which are recorded in indigenous chronicles or Buranjis and contemporary foreign records. An examination of the Company's records including the court-minutes or despatches, will reveal the personalities of the visitors and the objects of their visits. In our opinion the East India Company's records represent a virgin field for investigation to be taken up immediately before they crumble to pieces, or the hand of neglect place them beyond access and decipherment.

## SECTION II

### ASSAM GOVERNMENT RECORDS

In the following pages we propose to confine our remarks mainly to the records deposited at Government offices in Assam, as distinguished from those available in the archives of the Governments of Bengal and India, and of the India Office. This century of British rule in Assam has led to the accumulation of a large amount of documents and records in the offices of District, Divisional and Provincial headquarters which must contain priceless materials of historical and antiquarian importance.

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix A to Vol. V of the Proceedings of Meetings of Indian Historical Records Commission,

The first few years of British Administration were spent in adjusting or modifying the old institutions of the country to suit the new environments. The old revenue system obtaining in the Ahom period, which was mainly based on the principle of personal service, was supplanted by a new system which imposed payment of revenue in cash. The system of slavery which was the backbone of Assamese society in the older regime was abolished in consonance with the expanding democratic aspirations of the new age.<sup>1</sup> The old criminal administration, whose rigours equalled, if not surpassed those of the Medes and the Persians, was replaced by a more relaxing and humanising system.<sup>2</sup> The duties and functions of state officials of the older Government were altered and remodelled on the lines of those of the Bengal Government, which themselves were the product of a combination of Mogul and British political genius. Official procedures were fixed on new principles; the maintenance of accounts and treasury records were based on the system then prevailing in Bengal.

Before the British connection, Assamese was the language of official and legal functions, while after the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, a premium was set on the knowledge of English, Bengali and even Persian. The educational institutions had to be overhauled and reorganised to suit the changing conditions of the time. Steps had to be taken for the sanitation of towns; and town committees, the ancestors of the present municipality sprang up in all the headquarters of the province. Large grants of Lakheraj and Nisf-khiraj lands made to temples and individuals by sovereigns of the preceding age had to be examined to verify the actual possession of the donees. Scions and relatives of the last reigning families and of the nobles whose fortunes were undermined by the Burmese depredations and the change of Government had to be provided with means of living, by the grant of pensions, remission of revenue or otherwise. Steps had to be taken to efface the marks of the Burmese ravages and the consequent depopulation of the country.

The first few decades of British rule in Assam were devoted to adjustment and rapprochement, necessitating a great deal of correspondence between the local authorities and those stationed at the Provincial and Imperial headquarters of the East India Company.

The records are made more valuable by the fact that the task of adjusting Assam to western ideals of Government was carried on by highly efficient administrators, who have unfortunately been forgotten but who would have been held in grateful veneration as eminent empire-builders if they had the opportunity of serving elsewhere. Men of the calibre and

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. A. J. Moffatt Mills remarked in his Report on the Province of Assam that the freedom of the slaves of the upper classes "carried ruin to them, and has reduced many families of respectability to extremed indigency."

<sup>2</sup> Article 3 of the Treaty of March, 1833, by which the Government of Upper Assam was handed over to Raja Purandar Singha laid down:—"The Raja Purandar Singha binds himself, in the administration of Justice in the country now made over to him, to abstain from the practices of former Rajas of Assam, as to cutting off noses and ears, extracting eyes or otherwise mutilating or torturing, and that he will not inflict cruel punishment for slight faults." Ghanakanta Singha Juvaraj etc. in their memorial submitted to Mr. Mills, through Maniram Dewan, regarded the abolition of the cruel punishments practised in former times as one of the blessings of the new regime.



attainment of David Scott and Major-General Francis Jenkins are not plenty as blackberries, and the labours of their lives are buried in the dust-worn records of Assam offices.

The present generation have scarcely heard the name of David Scott (1786-1831), the saviour of Assam from the atrocities of the Burmese invaders. Though he has been fortunate to have a slender *Memoir*, the biography as well as its hero have now both been forgotten. We scarcely know anything of his beneficent official measures for which his name is "held in grateful remembrance and veneration by the native population to whom he was justly endeared by his impartial dispensation of justice, his kind and conciliatory manners, and his constant and unwearied endeavours to promote their happiness and welfare" <sup>1</sup>.

His popularity was due to his vigilant watchfulness of the interests of the children of the soil, and to his sympathetic recognition of their claims in preference to those of the foreigners. He wrote to Captain White in a letter dated April 20, 1830, on the appointment of an outsider superseding the claims of local candidates:—

"If he is not a native of Assam, the reason of appointing a foreigner is to be explained" <sup>2</sup>.

Captain White's continuation of appointing foreigners in Kamrup met with the following reprimand from David Scott:—

"I should consider it expedient to appoint a native of Assam to that and every other vacant office to which they may be competent".

Captain White <sup>3</sup> subsequently appointed several foreigners in the Police Department ignoring the claims of the Assamese candidates. David Scott commented on the procedure of the District Magistrate of Kamrup in the following words:—

"To the individuals nominated I have no objection to make, but I cannot approve of the continued exclusion of the natives from offices; many of them may be competent by this time, and I request that you will explain the grounds upon which eight Bengalis have been appointed as police moherers out of ten".

An anonymous writer in the *Calcutta Review* of 1853 testifies to the fact that David Scott "entertained a favourable opinion of the natural ability and also of the integrity of the native character."

In an obituary notice of David Scott, reprinted in the *Asiatic Journal* of March, 1830, from the *East Indian*, similar tribute is paid to Scott's statesmanly courtesy and sympathy,—“Mr. Scott treated the natives with great affability and offered chairs to the most respectable of those who visited, an uncommon practice with gentlemen high in the service, but one which is

<sup>1</sup> Extract from the inscription on the tomb of David Scott at Cherrapunjee.

<sup>2</sup> The three extracts from David Scott's official orders are taken from the now defunct Assamese *Maga Alochani*, Vol. VIII, pages 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Captain White, afterwards Lieutenant-Colonel and Political Agent, Upper Assam Zinc "fell in repelling the attack on the post of Sudiyah on January 29, 1839. Captain White was the author of *Political History of the Extraordinary Events, which led to the Burmese War, 1827*.

calculated to win the affections of the people..... Mr. Scott was remarkably diligent, beginning work every morning under his blanket, as he never used fires..... It is stated that Scott had expressed his opinion "that on the liberal and extensive employment of the natives depended the result, whether the judicial system could or could not be rendered efficient."

Occasionally, David Scott tempered his official reserve with a kind of mellow humour which is generally incompatible with Scott's humour. the stern realities of the life of a frontier administrator.

Chandra Kanta Singha, the *ex*-king of Assam, asked David Scott as to the necessity of recording the lengthy depositions of witnesses at court, Mr. Scott replied:—

"Swargadeo, you are of celestial origin, and can recollect everything; we are earth-born, and when we go to dinner we forget what has been said during the day. Therefore we write down what we hear."

Even after the subsidence of hostilities with Burma, a couple of Burmese chieftains made their appearance near the Nao-Dihing in Upper Assam, who despatched a letter to Mr. Scott with the request that he would advance no further, but return to Rungpoor of which he was the Commissioner before he came to Assam.

Mr. Scott returned the following reply:—

"I have received your communication. If, my friends, you want us to quit the country of Assam, you had better come and turn us out."

Though an administrator, David Scott did not abandon the amenities of a cultured life. His library consisted of translations Scott as a student. from classical authors, choice fictions of Defoe and of Mrs. Radcliffe, *Rasselas*, Thomas a Kempis, and *Paradise Lost*. It is believed that he compiled a monograph on the Miris, a docile community living in the plains of Upper Assam. We learn on the authority of the unknown contributor of the *Calcutta Review*, of Mr. Scott's "blending of service duties and literary pursuits." It goes without saying that official report and correspondence compiled by or under the supervision of a scholarly administrator like David Scott would be an invaluable source of information, bearing traces of accurate and critical observation.

Mr. T. Robertson succeeded Mr. Scott in 1831 as Commissioner of Assam, and the Governor-General's Agent to the North-East Frontier of Bengal.<sup>1</sup> The most significant political measure which had originated in Scott's time, and which was adopted by Mr. Robertson was the transfer of Upper Assam or the *Junior Khanda* in 1833 to Swargadeo Purandar Singha who was once the king of entire Assam during the period of Burmese invasion.

The successor of Mr. Robertson in the Commissionership of Assam was a man of versatile ability and genius, who, were he Francis Jenkins. relieved from the responsible drudgery of the administration of a newly conquered Indian province, might have acquired immortal fame in the field of historical scholarship. This was Captain Jenkins, afterwards Major-General, whose mortal remains lie enclosed within the limits of a frail and dilapidated vault in the old cemetery at Gauhati. Francis Jenkins was born on August 4, 1793, and came

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Robertson was the author of "Political Incidents of the First Burmese War, 1853.

to India as a commissioned officer of the Bengal Army<sup>1</sup>. His historical predilections led him to an intimate association with the Asiatic Society of Bengal of which he was the Physical and Commercial Secretary in 1828 with Horace Hayman Wilson as Secretary. Before he came to Assam he had figured in the operations connected with the First Burmese War as we learn from Captain Pemberton's *Report on the North-East Frontier*. In 1832, he was deputed to Assam by Lord William Bentinck to examine and report on the resources of the newly conquered province. His interest in Assam thus stimulated by investigations for official purposes remained with him throughout his life. While engaged in the work of deputation, the Commissioner'ship of Assam fell vacant, and Captain Jenkins was eventually appointed to the post in January 1834, and he continued to remain in that office till February 1861,—the longest period for which any officer was placed at the head of the administration of the province. So great was the love that Jenkins cherished for Assam and the Assamese that he settled at Gauhati, the scene of his life's labours, till his death on August 28, 1866.

William Robinson, who was for many years associated with the education of the province<sup>2</sup>, referred to Jenkins so early as 1841, as the "officer to whose judicious management and praiseworthy exertions, the province of Assam was indebted for its present prosperous condition." An anonymous writer in the *Calcutta Review*, Part I, 1853, paid an eloquent tribute to the "wise care of the late Colonel Jenkins, whose power of sympathy with the people won for him universal confidence, under whom the interests of the country were defended against some of the most fatal influences that can beset the life of a people." This brilliant testimony has been confirmed by the evidence of all who have recorded their observations on the condition of the country during the period, and by the reverent gratitude with which the Assamese people still refer to the "days of General Jenkins."<sup>3</sup>

He came to Assam at a very transitional period of its history. The neighbouring tribes were not completely subdued, and their sporadic incursions into innocent Assamese villages disturbed the peace established with zeal and vigilance on the part of the rulers. Cachar, Jaintia, Naga Hills, the Mattack country,

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<sup>1</sup> Jenkins's *Diary and Notes, 1837-1841*, which is mentioned in the Imperial Library Catalogue under the name of the Assam Commissioner, is, I am told, the journal of one Major Jenkins, Political Agent at Cooch Behar, after whom an English School has been christened at that place as I learn from a letter of its Headmaster. I am told by a Gauhati resident that Major-General F. Jenkins was a man of Cornwall; he came to India in the employ of the Mercantile Marine under Admiral Lord Exmouth, fought in Egypt where he was wounded, his services being subsequently transferred to the Government of Lord William Bentinck. But I have not been able to verify these statements. The Right Hon'ble Sir Lawrence Jenkins, P. C., writes in his letter of 12th January 1928 that he is not related to the family of Major-General F. Jenkins.

<sup>2</sup> William Robinson was the Principal of the Gauhati Seminary and then Inspector of Schools, and contributed numerous articles to the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal on the languages of the peoples of the Brahmaputra Valley. Vide *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* for March 1849 and Part I, 1851. The extract is taken from the dedicatory preamble to his *Descriptive Account of Assam*.

<sup>3</sup> The only memorials of Colonel Jenkins at Gauhati are the Jenkins Road, the Jenkins Ghat and the tomb at the old cemetery.

and the territory round Sadiya were annexed after protracted engagements and negotiations. Upon him fell also the onerous task of consolidating the new system of government. The districts of Lakhimpur and Sibsagar had continued to remain under Ahom rule till 1838 ; and Jenkins had to deal with the question of incorporating Purandar Singha's territories on account of his failure to pay the stipulated tribute fixed in the Treaty of March, 1833. He entered into a detailed examination of Lakheraj tenures of Assam.

An echo of the Sepoy Mutiny, though faint, was heard in this distant region. Jenkins with the boldness and promptitude which characterised him took timely and vigorous steps, and destroyed all possibilities of the repetition of the horrors which had darkened the atmosphere of Northern India. In fact, every phase of the government of the country during the twenty-seven years of his association bore the impress of Jenkins' towering personality and breadth of political vision.

He had to marshal the evidence, and place at the disposal of Mr. Mills the necessary facilities for his enquiry into the administration of Assam. It was Jenkins at whose suggestion, made to Sir Charles, Trevelyan, "a Secretary of the East India Government" that Baptist Missionary activities were inaugurated in the Assam Valley in 1836, "as a step toward entering China from the West".

Fortunately for us Colonel Jenkins' views on Assam are available in the pages of Mr. Moffatt Mills' *Report on the Province of Assam*, compiled in 1853. What Jenkins says about the impoverished and depopulated condition of the country is worth quoting—

"When we assumed charge of Assam, nothing could be more unpromising than the state of the country. The small remnant of the people had been so harassed and oppressed by the long civil and internal wars that had followed the accession of Rajah Gaurinath Singha in 1780 down to 1826, that they had almost given up cultivation, and lived on jungle roots and plants, and famine and pestilence carried off thousands that had escaped the sword and captivity. All men of rank, the heads of the great Ahom and priestly families, had retired to one district, Goalpara, having, with little exception, lost the whole of their property ; with the nobility and gentry retired a vast body of the lower classes ; the former returned to Assam after our occupation, but large numbers of the latter never returned, and their descendants form still a large part of the population of Habbraghat and Khoontaghat".

He admits at the same time that "the Assamese had very few wants ; they lived principally upon rice, and were clothed in their own silk and cotton". The means which he suggested for "accelerating the progress of the Province" are interesting in the light of the history of the subsequent years—

"A systematic improvement of the main roads is one of the most obvious means we have. A great obstacle now to the clearing of wastes is the want of communication between these tracts and the cultivated districts ;

1. *Assam Baptist Missionary Conference Report*, 1911, pages 32-33 and *Life of Nathan Brown*, page 100.

whenever this is removed, clearances will take place. The only other great means of improvement that we have is the encouragement to Europeans to take up waste lands for the purpose of cultivating the great staples of external commerce. There are few Provinces the lands and climate of which are more favourable than those of Assam for some of the great articles of trade, but a long, tedious and expensive communication with the sea-port of Calcutta is a great drawback to European enterprise, and another is the want of labourers”.

It should be remembered that the first regular steamer service between Assam and Calcutta was launched in 1846 during the administration of Colonel Jenkins. It is said that on hearing the sound of the siren, the unsophisticated village folks would line themselves on the banks of the river to witness the majestic sight, and make offerings of flower and betel-nut to the divine power which manifested itself in the propulsion of the steam-boats.

By far the greatest service which Jenkins had rendered to Assam was the stimulus he gave to the tea industry. It was due to his encouragement and help that the Assam Tea Company was established in 1839, with one John Jenkins as Chairman of its Board of Directors. Major-General Jenkins is also credited in some quarters as the discoverer of the tea plant in Assam, known as *Thea Assamica*, identical with the tea of commerce then in circulation, the other rivals to the honour of the discovery being Captain Charlton and Mr. Charles Alexander Bruce.<sup>1</sup> When we remember that the Agricultural Society of Calcutta presented to Jenkins a gold medal in recognition of his services in connection with the discovery of the plant, and the following testimony of William Robinson who knew him so intimately, we cannot but think that Jenkins had a very significant share in imparting to the Assam plant its vast potentiality as a commercial commodity of international value,—

“In 1832, Lord William Bentinck deputed Captain Jenkins to report upon the resources of the country. The subject of the tea plants was brought to his attention by Mr. C. Alexander Bruce. To Captain Jenkins, no less to Mr. Bruce, is Great Britain indebted for the discovery of the indigenous tea plant of Assam; and the merit is much the greater, for the spirited manner in which he has taken the necessary steps to promote the culture of the tea plant”.

In his *Report on the manufacture of tea in Assam*, J. A.S.B., July, 1839, Mr. C. A. Bruce has attributed to himself the honour of the discovery of the plant in Assam,—

“In looking forward to the unbounded benefit the discovery of this plant will produce to England, to India,—to millions, I cannot but thank God for so great a blessing to our country. *When I first discovered it, some*

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†Srijut Benudhar Sarma has pressed the claims of Maniram Datta Barua to the honour of the discovery of the Tea Plant in Assam. Maniram Barua was the Dewan of the Assam Tea Company, and proprietor of two of the three plantations belonging to private speculators. See Mills' Report, Sibsagar, paragraph 47.

14 years ago, I little thought that I should have been spared long enough to see it become likely eventually to rival that of China, and that I should have to take a prominent part in bringing it to so successful an issue”.

Mr. Bruce met the octogenarian headman of a Nara village to the south-west of Gabharu-Parbhat, who affirmed that his father while a young man came from Munkum and settled at Tipam, opposite Jaipur, and that he brought with him the tea plant and planted it on the Tipam hill. In order to verify the statement, Mr. Bruce cleared the tract on the Tipam hill, and came upon an area, measuring 300 yards by 300 with a thick plantation of tea. This would place the first introduction of tea into Assam in the early years of the 18th century. Mr. Bruce also met an Ahom who declared to him “that it was Sooka (Sookapha?), or the first Kacharry (Ahom?) Rajah of Assam, who brought the tea plant from Munkum ; he said it was written in his *puthi*, or history.”

The Tea Committee in an official despatch paid similar tribute to the “indefatigable researches of Captain Jenkins and Lieutenant Charlton” which led to the introduction of a new industry in Assam of such world-wide importance.

The thing that endeared Jenkins to the Assamese people was his unbounded sympathy and championship of their cause ; he recommended to the Bengal Government the gift of pensions to the relatives of the last reigning king of Assam, and specially to the Ranis of Kameswar Singha, son of Swargadeo Purandar Singha, who were the Saring Rajas’ mother, Madhabi Kuonri, Padmahari Kuonri and Rupabati Khatania. Sometimes he carried his sympathy to an excess. One Betharam, a Brahman gentleman of respectability was convicted at the sessions of theft and sentenced to three years’ rigorous imprisonment. Colonel Jenkins directed his release on the ground of his high caste and respectability. Mr. Mills commented on his action as follows:—

“I can see no sufficient ground for this remission of punishment. As an example it is calculated to do mischief ; the law is no respecter of persons, and certainly should not respect a felon, because he is of the better class. The Commissioner also clearly exceeded his authority in mitigating the sentence.”

Jenkins’ success and popularity as an administrator were due to his personal affability and helpfulness, and his capacity to enter into the feelings and mentality of the people, for whose well-being he was responsible to the Government. His zeal for the enlightenment and education of the Assamese was best demonstrated by the manner in which he helped all deserving youths who approached him for monetary help to defray the expenses of their education. The late Rai Bahadur Gunabhiram Borooh—a distinguished scholar and judicial officer, was granted a special allowance by Colonel Jenkins from his own pocket which enable him to prosecute his studies at school. It was Colonel Jenkins who chiefly encouraged Anandaram Dhekial Phukan to proceed to Calcutta for higher studies and subsequently placed the letter in the covenanted civil service as a Junior Assistant,—a unique honour for an Indian in those days. School boys had an easy access to his house and orchard, though at his gate he posted a couple of stalwart up-country *darwans*, Nityananda and Hanuman

Singh—as an irreducible minimum of the inseparable appendage to the residence of a provincial governor, specially for the gratification of an oriental people who were accustomed to the imposing sight of slave-drawn palanquins and the majestic swing of caparisoned elephants. He conferred high offices on several members of the once-powerful families, or made other provisions for their maintenance. His philanthropy and magnificence combined with his intimate knowledge of the history, habits and feelings of the governed as well as his zealous watchfulness of their interests made him, in the imagination of the people, a worthy successor of the Assamese Swargadeos and Barphukans, and this was one of the reasons which made our countrymen look upon the new dispensation as a god-send, and which divested it of much of the odium of an alien connection. Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, the most enlightened Assamese gentleman of the time, penned the following lines as representative of the prevailing sentiment of the people,—

“Our countrymen hailed the day on which British supremacy was proclaimed in the Province of Assam, and entertained sanguine expectations of peace and happiness from the rule of Britain. For several years antecedent to the annexation, the Province groaned under the oppression and lawless tyranny of the Burmese, whose barbarous and inhuman policy depopulated the country and destroyed more than one-half of the population, which had already been thinned by intestine commotions and repeated civil wars. We cannot but acknowledge with feelings of gratitude, that the expectations which the Assamese had formed of the happy and beneficial results from the Government of England, have, in a great measure, been fulfilled ; and the people of Assam have now acquired a degree of confidence in the safety of their lives and property which they never had the happiness of feeling for ages past.”<sup>1</sup>

Though a great administrator and a lay pioneer of an industry which has made Assam known all over the world, Jenkins deeply interested himself in the history and antiquities of Assam. He himself contributed a number of articles to the pages of the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, and inspired others to contribute on subjects relating to Assamese history, philology, topography, minerology, etc., when he found that his administrative labours would not give him sufficient time to enter into the investigation. The first noteworthy history of Assam was compiled in 1841 by William Robinson at the instance of Colonel Jenkins to whom it was dedicated.<sup>2</sup> Robinson's words testifying to the historical zeal of the administrator are worth quoting,—

“The present work was undertaken at the particular request of the distinguished officer to whom it is, with permission, dedicated. His literary talents, high attainments and superior knowledge of the province render

<sup>1</sup> Observations on the Administration of the Province of Assam by Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, Appendix F of Mills' Report.

<sup>2</sup> William Robinson, Inspector of Schools, died in Assam of fever in 1863 ; his remains were buried in Mr. Foster's compound at Nazira. Robins n is described in the inscription on the tomb as “the historian of Assam”. On 6th July 1859, Robinson's daughter Emmeline was married to Rev. Robert Bland, Chaplain of Gauhati, 1841-1859 ; Mr. Bland died on 26th November 1866, and was buried at Chandernagore ; he was succeeded by Chaplain Ayerst.

him by far the best qualified individual to write on the topics contained in the following pages. His more important duties, however, left him but little leisure for prosecuting such a task. Under these circumstances the author in complying with his request, was of opinion, that if no one possessed with higher qualifications came forward to undertake the work, it was better it should be done perfectly, better it should be done even as he might be capable of doing it than not be done at all."

Jenkins compiled in 1842 his "Selection of Papers regarding the Hill Tracts between Assam and Burma and on the Upper Brahmaputra", which is still a *vade mecum* for investigators interested in the topography of the inaccessible area serving as a link between Assam and Burma. Before this Jenkins had contributed to the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* the text of the inscription of a copper-plate grant of Vanamala-varmadeva, King of Kamarupa, with his learned and illuminating notes. The publication of the copper plate marked the beginning of a long continued interest in the copper-plate grants of the monarchs of ancient Assam, in the deciphering of which are associated the names of Mr. Torrens, Dr Venis, Dr. Bloch, Dr. Kielhorn, Dr. Hornle, and Mahamahopadhyaya Padmanath Bhattacharyya.<sup>1</sup> Colonel Jenkins discovered another copper-plate as we learn from his report on Lakheraj investigations submitted to Mr. Mills in 1853, —

"Many of the religious institutions of Assam, and of Kamarupa specially, go back to a great antiquity; two *phullees* (copper-plates) have been found in existence, sanctioning grants of land by two Rajahs of Kamrup, Dharmapal and Vanamala, of whom we know nothing, but the late Mr. Torrens was disposed to think they reigned about A.D. 1100 to 1200."

Mention may also be made of a few of the enquiries undertaken at the instance of Colonel Jenkins. William Robinson, as we have said before, compiled his *Descriptive Account of Assam* dealing comprehensively with the history, geography and resources of the province. He also studied the languages of the peoples of the Brahmaputra Valley and the results were published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. Maniram Dewan who had an intimate knowledge of the older and the new systems of government submitted a detailed account of the indigenous methods of washing for gold in the rivers of Assam, which will be highly valuable if any enterprising capitalist ever propose to revive the trade now lost.<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hugon gave an account of the silkworms and silks of Assam, representing a trade where Assam still stands unrivalled.<sup>3</sup> Reverend Nathan Brown published the results of his study of the Ahom and Khamti languages at the instance of Colonel Jenkins.<sup>4</sup> Jaduram Deka Borooah compiled a voluminous Assamese-Bengali dictionary in 1839 for Colonel Jenkins who presented the manuscript to the American Baptist Mission.

<sup>1</sup> The monarchs of ancient Kamarupa whose copper-plate grants have been discovered and deciphered hitherto are Bhaskaravarma, Vanamaladeva, Valavarma, Ratnapala, Indrapala, Dharmapala and Vaidyadeva; incidentally we get the names of many other sovereigns of Kamarupa in these copper-plates.

<sup>2</sup> *Native Account of Washing for Gold in Assam* by Moneeram, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Volume VII, page 621. Further information on the subject was communicated by Captain Hannay in the same issue, page 625.

<sup>3</sup> *Silkworms and Silks of Assam* by Thomas Hugon, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1837.

<sup>4</sup> *Alphabets of the Tai Language*, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1837, and *Comparison of Indo-Chinese Languages*, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1837; both by Rev. N. Brown.



Jenkins despatched occasionally to the Asiatic Society of Bengal manuscript *Puthis* of Assam, sacred beads, old curious and relics and skins of strange animals and birds found in the jungles of the province under his administration. Besides, he arranged for an interchange of museum duplicates between the Asiatic Society and the Royal Institution of Cornwall. Any one who goes through the pages of the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* from 1835 to 1860 will be astonished to see the interest which a busy frontier administrator like Major-General Jenkins took in antiquarian research.

But unfortunately the life-work of such a rare personality is buried in official archives. That a study of the Government records in Assam will dispel much of the darkness hanging round his career and of those who were inspired by the ideal of their great master is evident and palpable.

In the year 1853, Mr. A. J. Moffatt Mills, Judge of the Sudder Dewanny and Nazamat Adawlats, was deputed by the Government of Bengal to visit the different Sudder stations of Assam, and to submit a report dealing with the "area, cultivation, mode of settlement, rates of assessment, population, manufactures, internal and external trade, means of internal communication, education, etc.,.....and the mode in which the administration of each has been conducted since the Districts have been placed under British authority." The scope of the book necessitated reference to the older system of Government upon which the new one was based. Mills' *Report* which was published in 1854, embodies several appendices which are highly valuable as they contain the views of people who were actually conducting the administration of the province or were engaged in some other vocation therein. There is also an interesting side-light into the history of Assam since the Treaty of Yandaboo. The chapters devoted to the several districts of Assam, are the forerunners of the present-day gazetteers. Among the appendices and incorporated documents mention may be made of the following :—

- (1) Colonel Jenkins' letter on the progress and prosperity of the province.
- (2) Major Vetch's letter submitting observations on the revenue system of Assam.
- (3) Some remarks of Colonel Matthie on the revenue system of Assam.
- (4) Memorial of the Assam Tea Company to Lord Dalhousie on certain natural impediments at present existing to the progress of their operations in the tea trade.
- (5) Colonel Jenkins' letter regarding Lakheraj enquiries.
- (6) Letter from Rev. A. H. Danforth of the American Baptist Mission, containing a brief statement of his views on the educational interests of the province.
- (7) Srijut Anandaram Dhekial Phukan's observations on the administration of the province of Assam. This is a highly valuable document, showing the extent of administrative and legal knowledge possessed by a young man of twenty-three. It also contains sober suggestions for the improvement of the administration of the province.

(8) The duties of the Political Agent of Upper Assam, since the resumption of the Government of the territory made over to Raja Purandar Singha, and that of Muttack.

(9) Letters from the officers in charge of the several districts on the hill tribes living in the neighbourhood of their respective jurisdictions, with a memorandum of British relations with Cooch Behar, Bhutan and the Garo Hills.

(10) Colonel Jenkins' letter containing an "account of our present relations with the hill tribes on the frontiers of this Province." This account embodies the earliest attempt at a systematic study of the following hill tribes of Assam:—The Garo tribes, the Khasi tribes, the Kukis, the Naga tribes, Bhutan under Dharam and Deb Rajahs, Bhutias under the Government of Tibet, the independent classes or tribes of Bhutias, Akas, Dufflas, Miris, Abors, Mishmees.

(11) Colonel Jenkins' letter regarding the resumption of Toolaram's country.

(12) Names of Chowdhurees of Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur.

(13) Petition of some Chowdhurees of Kamrup, praying for a fixed rate of assessment put on the cultivated lands and for other privileges.

(14) Detailed statement of political pensions paid from the treasury of the Collectors of Kamrup and Sibsagar.

(15) List of pupils educated in the Government school and employed in the different departments of Nowgong.

(16) Translation of a petition submitted by Maniram Datta Barua Dewan, on account of Ghanakanta Singha Juvaraj and others.

The value of Mr. Mills' *Report* need not be emphasised at the present moment. It has been a source of constant inspiration to officials and publicists alike. The object of Mills' compilation was chiefly official, being an advance report submitted to the Government of Bengal in view of the contemplated visit of Lord Dalhousie, Governor-General of India, to the province of Assam, but its utility is not confined to official circles. Its pages reveal a systematic attempt on the part of the British rulers to establish an organised Government in a country torn "by the mutual jealousies and dissensions of the Rajahs and Mantris", and depopulated "by the oppression and atrocities of the Burmese". It is valuable also for the light it throws on the history of the period, when the semi-medieval institutions of the country were gradually being remodelled on the ideals of the new regime. It also throws a side-light into the doings and views of administrators like Jenkins, Brodie, White, Matthie, Butler, Holroyd, Neufville, whose names became household words, being woven into the folksongs of the unsophisticated Assamese people. The book is now scarcely available, and the question of reprinting it with notes and index may be taken up in future when the value of historical documents is recognised in all quarters in the province.

The value of Mr. Mills' *Report* is enhanced by his impartial and sympathetic comment on some of the problems which vitally affected the interests of the Assamese people. The introduction of Bengali in the schools in Assam seriously

hampered the progress of education ; the system was most stubbornly opposed by the enlighten section of the Assamese people, the lead being taken by Srijut Anandaram Dhekial Phukan<sup>1</sup>. It is gratifying to note that Mr. Mills sympathised with the birth-right of the people when he wrote :—

“The people complain, and in my opinion with much reason, of the substitution of Bengalee for the Vernacular Assamese. (1) Introduction of Bengalee is the language of the courts, not of their Assamese. popular books and *shastras*, and there is a strong prejudice to its general use. It is because instruction is imparted to the youths in a foreign tongue that they look only to Government for employ. Assamese is described by Mr. Brown, the best scholar in the province, as a beautiful simple language, differing in more respects from than agreeing with the Bengalee, and I think we made a great mistake in directing that all business should be transacted in Bengalee, and that the Assamese must acquire it. It is too late now to retrace our steps, but I would strongly recommend Anandaram Phukan’s proposition to the favourable consideration of the Council of Education, *viz.*, the substitution of the Vernacular language in lieu of Bengalee, the publication of a series of popular works in the Assamese language, and the completion of the course of Vernacular education in Bengalee. I feel persuaded that a youth will, under this system of tuition, learn more in two than he now acquires in four years. An English youth is not taught Latin until he is well grounded in English, and in the same manner an Assamese should not be taught a foreign language until he knows his own”.

Again his views on the practice of appointing outsiders in supersession of the claims of the Assamese are worth quoting, as (2) Appointment of illustrative of the best traditions of British justice which outsiders. the Judge of the Sudder Dewanny and Nazamat Adawlat brought with him in investigating into the problems of the province,—

“The natives of the province have great reason to complain of the preference which is too often given to Bengalees, when selecting officers to fill vacancies. A number of Bengalees came into Assam when we took the province, and from the uneducated state of the Assamese it was necessary to give them service, but there are now in Sibsagar and Gauhati many young men of high family and good character who have qualified themselves for employ, and it is most discouraging to them to see most of the high and some of the inferior offices filled by foreigners. When I was Commissioner of Cuttak, the Government at my recommendation interdicted the employment of Bengalees, not domiciled in the country, without the special sanction of the Commissioner in Orissa, and I think the same order might, with the greatest advantage, be introduced into Assam.”

Among the historical documents deposited at Government offices in Assam mention may be made of the copper-plates and *Pera-kakats*. *pera-kakats*, which served as records-of-rights and titles to ownership in the Ahom regime. The copper-plates indicate grants made by the sovereigns of Assam to temples and religious institutions providing for the perpetual maintenance of worship, and to

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Phukan advocated the re-introduction of Assamese in his *Observations on the Administration of the Province of Assam* submitted to Mr. Mills, and in a separate monograph, *viz.*—*A Few Remarks on the Assamese Language*, 1855. He also wrote a number of Assamese text-books as well as numerous articles in the *Arunodoi*.

individuals who had rendered some distinguished service to the state or had earned the special favour of the rulers. The seal of the donor consisting of his name and title, and the royal insignia—the image of an elephant in the case of the Hindu monarchs of ancient Kamarupa and a unicorn if he was an Ahom Swargadeo—are carved on every plate. A copper-plate grant was generally supplemented by the conveyance of a document in thick cotton paper, giving more elaborate details of the grant, the area and boundaries of the land, names of the servitors or paiks assigned, and occasionally a mere reproduction of the contents of the original copper-plate. This was known as a *pera-kakat*, or a box paper, a duplicate copy of each being preserved with care in the local revenue establishments and in the royal treasury in charge of the Majumdar Barua. The name *pera-kakat* is extended to all ancient documents recorded in paper relating to grants of land or rights of ownership, which by their very nature demanded careful preservation. An unknown chronicler states that Swargadeo Lakshmi Singha, 1769-1780, carried with him the box containing these documents when he fled from the Ahom capital Rangpur on the approach of the Moamarias<sup>1</sup>.

The Ahom king Siva Singha, 1714-1744, made a complete survey of the country which was completed in 1742-43. We learn from Colonel Jenkins' letter on Lakheraj tenures appended to Mr. Mills' Report that "the register compiled on that survey is complete as far as regards the Zilla of Kamroop, of which three or more copies are extant; two of these, sealed by Mr. Scott, were deposited, one in his own office, and the other in that of the Collector at Gauhati. This record is called the *perah-kaguz* and contains a register of all the lands granted up to the date of its completion." Besides he also refers to similar registers of lands granted in the districts of Nowgong, Darrang and Sibsagar, prepared by the Rajahs during their administration or by British officials with the help of native officers who had also served on similar duties under the older regime<sup>2</sup>.

A large number of these *pera-kakats* and copper-plates have now been accumulated in the record-rooms of the district and divisional headquarters. The individuals who received the grants were men of consideration in their age, and the title-deeds will reveal clues to their lives and careers. They will also present a faithful picture of the revenue administration of Assam in ancient times and of the various incidences of taxation which are enumerated in each grant of the Ahom period as exempting the beneficiaries from their payment.

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<sup>1</sup> A manuscript Assamese chronicle or Buranji dealing with the reign of Lakshmi Singha, in possession of the American Baptist Mission Gauhati.

<sup>2</sup> "The officers who had the preparing and keeping the *Lakheraj* records were Mozumder Burrooahs and Mozemdars, in whose families the appointments were hereditary. We had three or four of these officers at the commencement of the investigation, who were personally conversant with the grants made during the reigns of the three last Rajahs, and they knew from their fathers what grants had been made through the reigns of the three preceding Rajahs, or back to the date of the *pera-kagaz*. These officers have been of great use in identifying grants, for in almost all instances one or other of them could recognise the handwriting of genuine Mohuzurs." Colonel Jenkins' Report on Lakheraj Enquiries in Mills' Report.

The value of these copper-plates is immense, specially when we know how they have helped to piece together the history of ancient Kamarupa which would have otherwise remained in mysterious darkness.<sup>1</sup> Though the grants of the Ahom Rajas are of comparatively recent origin, the interval that separates us from the Treaty of Yandaboo will not always be a century old. Time may come when the Ahom kings will be relegated to the same darkness and oblivion as their Hindu predecessors, and posterity will not excuse us if the present age fails to preserve these valuable records, though fully conscious of their high historical significance and importance. We would suggest the compilation of a complete collection of all ancient copper-plates and title-deeds now available in official archives and in possession of private owners<sup>2</sup>.

Sylhet came under British occupation with the transfer of the Dewani to the Hon'ble East India Company in 1765, and its records have received their due share of attention on account of their association with William Makepiece Thackeray, the grandfather of the famous India-born novelist. Thackeray became the first Collector of Sylhet in 1772, and Robert Lindsay in 1778. The records relating to them have been thoroughly ransacked, and the two distinguished Collectors commemorated in comprehensive biographies. Besides, the labours of Archdeacon Firminger have brought to light all the historical records deposited in the Sylhet Collectorate. Through the efforts of the same indefatigable Archdeacon the Rungpoor records are now available in print. They are valuable as materials for the history of the early trade relations between Assam and the East India Company as Rungpoor was the intermediate district between the two territories<sup>3</sup>, Mr. E. Lethbridge wrote in the *Calcutta Review*, Volume 54,—“Turning to the Division of Rajshahi, we find a great number of documents of a historical nature in the Rungpoor Collectorate, illustrating the relations of Government with Bhutan, Kuch Behar and Assam. These records date from 1781”.—*Bengal Mofussil Records*.

The activities of the American Baptist Mission have not as yet been brought within the purview of any close historical scrutiny, though their contribution to the enlightenment and education of the people has been of the most significant character.<sup>4</sup> The primary

<sup>1</sup> A connected history of ancient Kamarupa has been compiled by Mahamahopadhya Padmanath Bhattacharyya—the discoverer of the copper-plate grants of Kumar Bhaskaravarma, the friend of Emperor Harsabhardana and of Hieuen Tsang—with the help of the copper-plates hitherto discovered.

<sup>2</sup> A collection of the texts of the copper-plate grants of Swargadeo Rajeswar Singha, 1751-1769, was published in the present writer's monograph on the reign of that monarch in the *Banhi*, Volumes 15 and 16.

<sup>3</sup> Hunter's *Thackeray in India*, Bradley-Birt's *Sylhet Thackeray*, Lord Lindsay's *Lives of the Lindsays*. Archdeacon Firminger's District Records of Sylhet and Rungpoor.

<sup>4</sup> This remark applies with equal force to the other Christian Missions serving in Assam though they are of later growth, as knowledge of local history, customs and language is a necessary preliminary to all missionary activities,—Roman Catholic Mission of Assam, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Evangelical Lutheran (Grossner's) Mission, London Baptist Mission, Canadian Baptist Mission, Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission, Thadokuki Pioneer Mission, Church of God American Mission, Salvation Army.

A short but authentic account of the American Baptist Mission, 1836-1911, was published in Assam Baptist Missionary Conference Report, 11th Session, 1911, pages 31-70.

object of the Mission which came to Assam in 1836/ was evidently evangelistic, but it also incidentally fostered the development of the Assamese language, and protected it at a stage when its extinction was a foregone conclusion, on account of the preference given to Bengali and the determined effort in certain quarters to brand it with the inferior status of a *patois* or dialect.

The first Assamese printed book was a translation of the Holy Bible, made by Atmaram Sarma and published by the Serampore Missionaries in 1813. An illustrated Assamese magazine named *Arunodoi* was started by the Mission in 1846. Its pages were filled with beautiful woodcuts engraved by Assamese craftsmen, and the subjects selected for treatment were religious as well as secular. The simple style in which the articles were written made the magazine very popular among Assamese village people who still dub any periodical as *Arundahi* or *Arunodoi*. The Mission laid the foundation of the study of the Assamese language by publishing a grammar and a dictionary, as well as numerous books and treatises for juvenile readers. Of the literary workers of the Mission the names of Reverends N. Brown, M. Bronson, A. H. Danforth, C. Barker, W. M. Ward, Hesselmeier and Mr. O. T. Cutter, stand pre-eminent; and of the Assamese who availed themselves of the facilities afforded by the unremitting zeal of the Missionaries the names of Anandaram Dhekial Phukan and Nidhi Levi Farwell<sup>1</sup> may be mentioned. But unfortunately the life-work of such selfless and disinterested workers as Brown and Bronson. Brown and Bronson is not popularly known at the present, though they have both been dealt with in authoritative biographies relating to their missionary activities here and abroad.<sup>2</sup> A descriptive account of the work of the American Baptist Mission during the first fifty years of its career in Assam will be a delightful and valuable study for readers in India and America not only for the picture of the pioneer enterprises of the workers, but also for the light it will throw on many interesting side-issues of historic importance. Who will not be delighted to read the following?—

“Mr. Brown admired the Assamese language; its open, agreeable vocalisation, its picturesque Sanscritic characters, its quaint inflections and idioms, became almost native to him. Above all, he delighted in its marked family likeness to the European tongues. He vindicated its independence of Bengali, and maintained its legitimate descent from the ancient Sanskrit.”

<sup>1</sup> An earlier attempt was made by David Scott to introduce Christian Missions into Assam. “Mr. Scott obtained the sanction of the Government for the entrance of Mr. Rae, a Baptist Missionary, into Assam”.—*Memoir of Mr. David Scott*.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. P. H. Moore of the Nowgong branch of the Mission said,—“The modern literature in Assamese, whether Christian or non-Christian may be said to be the product of the last sixty years of the nineteenth century. Brown, Bronson and Nidhi Levi are the trio of names that stand out prominently as the founders of Assamese Christian literature.”—*Missionary Conference Report, ibid*, page 63. A tribute to the literary activities of the Mission was paid by Anandaram Dhekial Phukan in his *Remarks on the Assamese Language*, 1855.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. N. Brown is immortalised in *The Whole World Kin: A Pioneer Experience among Remote Tribes, and other labours of Nathan Brown* by Mrs. Eliza W. Brown, and Rev. M. Bronson in *In a Far Country* by Harriette Bronson Gunn, Philadelphia. The following pages are based in these biographies.

The correspondence of the early mission workers is yet an unexplored mine of historical material. They came to Assam at a time when the older regime was first disappearing from view. They brought with them the indomitable spirit of early New England settlers, and their adaptations to their new environments as well their escapades with the aboriginal tribes in whose vicinity they had to work and preach had their counterpart in the struggles waged by the voyagers of the *Mayflower* and their successors in the land of their adoption.

Rev. Jacob Thomas was rowing on the 1st of July 1837, in a light canoe up the river towards Sadiya where he intended to devote his life as a preacher. "He was near Saikhwa, within an hour of Sadiya ; his field of labour was in sight, when two trees, from whose roots the earth had been washed by the swollen stream, went jarred, lost balance and fell with a crash across the middle boat, in which Mr. Thomas sat, instantly sinking it, the large one felling the missionary with a bolt of death."

Mr. Brown immortalised the tragic death of a brother worker in the following lines which were published in the *Calcutta Christian Observer*:—

"Alas ! the shore thine eye beholds,  
Thy feet shall never tread :  
Yon lofty tree a summons hath,  
To bear thee to the dead !  
The dwellers in that valley ne'er  
Shall hear thy warning voice,  
Nor the wild sons of yonder hills  
At thy approach rejoice."

In January 1839, the Khamtis made a raid upon Sadiya, and the story is thus related by Mr. Brown in his letters to Khamti raid, 1839. Dr. Bogles :—

"On the morning of the 28th of January, about three or four o'clock, this station, Sadiya, was attacked by the Khamtis. They took the place completely by surprise, and after cutting down the sentries, at the first onset made themselves masters of the stockade and magazine. At the same instant, four or five bands attacked the place in different directions, firing the houses and murdering indiscriminately all whom they met—men, women and children. Nearly the whole village and cantonments were in flames. Captain and Mrs. Hannay, Lieut. Marshall, and the apothecary Mr. Pingault and wife, were roused from their beds by the Khamti war-cry, and on coming out found themselves surrounded by the enemy. They, however, all succeeded in reaching the stockade in safety. This they found already in the hands of the enemy, but with the assistance of the sepoys the officers succeeded in a few minutes in dislodging them. Having now gained possession of the magazine, which contained the ammunition, they commenced a heavy fire of musketry, and the slaughter immediately became general. At length the artillery began its tremendous roar, and after a few minutes' resistance the enemy fled in all directions. The contest lasted about fifteen or twenty minutes. Col. White, the Commanding Officer, on first hearing the alarm, rushed out of his house, and was making his way to the magazine, but was met and surrounded by a party of the enemy, who over-powered and killed him on the spot." February 8th, 1839.

“Since the attack on Sadiya, the country has been in a state of continual commotion. The Khamtis, Singphows and Mishmis combined, have been plundering and carrying off the peaceable inhabitants, while the troops of the Government have been scouring the country in various directions in search of the enemy, and several sharp engagements have taken place in which the Khamtis and Singphows have met considerable loss.” March 29th, 1839.

On January 21, 1842, Mr. Brown had an interview with the *ex*-King Purandar Singha and his son Juvaraj Kaneswar Singha, and talked with them on religious subjects. The following record appears in his diary :—

“This afternoon I had the privilege of bearing witness for Christ before the old Raja and his attendants, and also his son, with each of whom I had an interview of about half an hour. The Raja seemed at first to smile at the idea of the foreign Padris coming to change his religion and that of his country. He at length, however, appeared more interested, and made minute inquiries respecting our doctrines, and the two disciples who embraced Christianity. His son, whom I called upon first, is a very interesting young man of twenty-five or thirty. He was very inquisitive respecting our theories of geography and astronomy, and urged me very hard to come and set up a school at Jorhat. He is anxious to learn English as well as the sciences..... The Raja and his son are the last remnant of the Ahom race of kings who entered Assam about A. D. 1228. They are supposed to be the lineal descendants of Indra, the King of heaven, and the Raja is always addressed by the title of *Sworogo Deo*, Lord of Heaven.”

Brown's note on Gadadhar Singha's tomb. Referring to the opening up of the tombs of Ahom kings at Charaideo, Mr. Brown wrote :—

“The tomb of King Gadadhar at Soraideo, as nearly as we could calculate without instruments, was ninety feet high, and so natural in its appearance that a stranger would scarcely have suspected it to be anything more than an ordinary hill.....Thirteen of these royal tombs were dug open during my residence in Assam, and I was told in the flowery language of the country, that when King Gadadhar's tomb was opened ‘the backs of three elephants were broken with the weight of the treasures it contained,’ meaning simply that three elephants were well loaded down.”

The first Assamese-English dictionary was compiled by Dr. Miles Bronson and the manuscript was finally revised in 1867 after Bronson's Dictionary. four years of ceaseless labour, at the end of which the author wrote :—

“I am very thankful to have been able to finish my four years' task on the Assamese and English dictionary.”

Mrs. Bronson described the lexicographical labours of her husband in a letter to her daughter Harriette :—

“Could you visit your old home to-day you would find your room occupied by papa as a study, where he is working hard all day on the dictionary. You would see in the centre a long table, covered with green baize, on which are piled at long intervals large books and writing materials in orderly confusion. You would see on the other side three dusky pundits, assisting him in his slow work. You would see mamma's rattan work basket standing close by papa's chair, where I sit near, ready to render him any



assistance in my power—such as looking up references, synonyms and definitions.....I have aided him in revision of the manuscript which is now about ready for the press.”

The Indian Historical Records Commission have taken steps to ascertain “the nature, date and extent of the old historical materials prior to 1850” deposited in the archives of all the Ruling Princes and Chiefs of India, and have also offered the services of expert representatives if necessary, “for the purpose of sifting, preserving and publishing the same”. Many of the Native States have taken advantage of this offer.<sup>1</sup> The only Native State within the jurisdiction of the Assam Government is Manipur, and an examination of its records, if arranged, may reveal new materials of historical importance. Manipur has long been connected with Assam, and their most popular sovereign Jay Singha or Karta-Maharaj, offered his daughter Kuranganayani to Swargadeo Rajeswar Singha, 1751-1769, when he sought the latter’s help to oust the Burmese invaders from Manipur. The grateful Jay Singha again came to Assam, during the reign of Gaurinath Singha, 1780-1795, on the invitation of the premier Purnananda Buragohain, to render assistance in the suppression of the Moamaria revolt. We have seen some Manipuri chronicles where Jay Singha’s visits to Assam or *Tekhau Leipak* in the Manipuri dialect, are fully described.<sup>2</sup> Captain Pemberton came upon a Shan chronicle during his residence at Manipur. This was translated into the Manipuri language. The book contains a detailed narrative of the history of the Shans before their invasion of Assam under Sukapha in the early part of the thirteenth century; and Captain Pemberton acknowledges the material assistance he received from this book “in some discussions upon questions of boundary with the Court of Ava.”<sup>3</sup> This was probably the Shan manuscript which Captain Pemberton gave to Rev. Brown when he halted at Calcutta in November 1835 during his first journey from Burma to Assam to take up missionary work in the latter. The chronicle “purported to be an abstract of the history of the Shan people from the first century to their subjection by the Burman conqueror Alompra and ascribing to the ancient Shans a powerful empire, called the kingdom of Pong, said to have embraced the territory south of Tibet, and having its capital at Mogaung, about half-way between Ava and Sadiya.” Very recently the members of the American Baptist Mission, stationed at Manipur, have come across several indigenous chronicles in Manipuri dealing with the Assam-Manipur relations of ancient times. No authentic history of Manipur has yet come out, and the first attempt to sketch the early history of the State and its people, “which is enveloped in darkness”, was made by Mr. A. F. M. Abdul Ali, Secretary to the Indian Historical Records Commission with the help of the Proceedings and Minutes of the Government of India.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings of meetings of the Indian Historical Records Commission, Volume VI, page 163.

<sup>2</sup> An account of the Assam-Manipur relations of the period, based on Assamese and Manipuri sources, was given by the present writer in history of the reign of Rajeswar Singh.

<sup>3</sup> R. B. Pemberton’s *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India*. See also *Life of Nathan Brown*, pages 104-105, for the two following sentences.

<sup>4</sup> Proceedings I. H. R. C., Volume V, page 119.

The Government of Burma might also be requested to communicate if there be any papers in their archives which throw light on the Assam-Burma relations of the pre-Yandaboo period<sup>1</sup>. The voluminous Burmese chronicle known as the *Konbaungset* and the *Hmannan or Glass Palace Chronicle*<sup>2</sup> contain references to the expeditions which Bodawapaya and Bageidaw, kings of Ava, despatched to Assam, and which culminated in the occupation of the country by the Burmese. We have accounts of the Burmese invasions written on this side of India, but we are absolutely in the dark as to what justification the Burmese generals had in committing the most atrocious barbarities upon the defenceless non-combatant civil population of the fair valley of the Brahmaputra, and carrying off thirty thousand of their men, women and children to beyond the confines of the Patkai mountains, though we learn from a recent history of Burma that the atrocities were the outcome of set policy of the monarchs of Ava, calculated to strike terror into the hearts of those who intended to provoke their revengeful hostility—

“Their oppressions were committed out of set policy, and the Burmese prided themselves on it, saying though at home they were a mild people, when invading foreign countries they deliberately gave way to all their passions, plundering and murdering without control so that foreigners should learn not to provoke them<sup>3</sup>.”

The records in the *dapter khans* or record-rooms of the Zemindari offices in the district of Goalpara will also reveal a large mass of local history hitherto unknown. The states represent the *disjecta membra* of the once extensive kingdom of Kamata or Cooch Behar which attained its highest expansion in the reign of King Naranarayan, 1540-1584. Some of them were constituted by the *Sunnuds* or *farmans* of Mogul Emperors and Governors, and had intimate political relations with the Mogul *subahdar* stationed at Rangamati. Goalpara, though a part of Assam from very ancient times was severed from the province for a few centuries, being a buffer-state of the Mogul Empire, while the rest of Assam had been enjoying absolute independence. But its social, religious and commercial relations with the rest of Assam continued in an uninterrupted fashion, so that when Goalpara was linked to Assam in 1826, it represented the reunion of one homogeneous people having common cultural, historical and linguistic affinities, slightly disturbed under the temporary influence of divergent political associations. The Zemindari records of the district of Goalpara will be helpful in reconstructing the history not only of Assam Proper but also of Greater Assam whose limits extended from the Karatoya to Sadiya.

<sup>1</sup> Assam had come in contact with Burma about 1764 through Burmese activities in Manipur, again, about 1795, when Burma had a series of engagements with the Singphows, as a result of which an Assamese princess named Rangili became the queen of Bodowapaya, Vide Cox's *Burman Empire*, and the present writer's *An Assamese Nur Jehan*, pages 10-12.

<sup>2</sup> *The Glass Palace Chronicle* has been translated into English by Professors Pe-Maung Tin and G. H. Luce, 1923.

<sup>3</sup> G. E. Harvey's *History of Burma*, 1925, pages 298-299. Mr. Harvey cites, for this statement, the authority of Crawford, author of *A Journal of an Embassy from the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava*, published in 1829.

The records in the office of the Honorary Director of Ethnography, Assam, contain a mass of materials, most of which were utilised by Sir Edward Gait for his momentous history of Assam, but are still important for the side-light they throw on many aspects of local history and anthropology, specially in view of the new matter which has accumulated since the first publication of Gait's history in 1906. We have there the handiwork of Lieut. Colonel P. R. T. Gurdon, formerly Honorary Director of Ethnography, Assam, whose life-long devotion to the cause of the Assamese and of their history and antiquities rendered him a worthy successor of Major-General Francis Jenkins in the Government of Assam Proper.

While speaking of the district records of Assam, mention must be made of the services rendered by Archdeacon W. K. Firminger, D.D., B.LITT., who studied those of Sylhet, Chittagong, Rungpoor and Dinajpur in 1908 and 1909 under the auspices of the Government of the now defunct province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. The results of his antiquarian exploration are now published. But the records of the other district offices of Assam are as likely to offer us valuable information as those of Sylhet which are now available in print. It is only after all the district records have been thoroughly ransacked that we can come upon the documents illustrating the political services of David Scott or his successors. The Archdeacon's words in this connection are worth quoting—

"In some Assam Record Room we ought to be able to discover the records of David Scott, whose memory has not yet lost its magic on the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, and whose lofty monument looks down from the rain-beaten crag of Cherrapoonjee over the sleeping plains of the Surama."<sup>1</sup>

What Sir Alexander Muddiman wrote in 1904 of the old records of the Midnapore Collectorate is applicable to those of Assam district and divisional offices—

"The original letters, if kept any longer in their present form, will crumble to dust almost at once. They are of various sizes and shapes, and are bound up with no particular care. Many are torn, and every time the volume is opened, they are bound to be damaged. Torn pieces of the letters are simply placed in hap-hazard, and are exceedingly liable to be lost."<sup>2</sup>

It is a good sign that Indian scholars and Government authorities have realised the importance of the official records, and steps have been taken in many places to prepare and print classified lists in order to make them readily accessible to intending investigators. In a meeting of the Royal Society of Art held on January 18, 1912—

"The policy of printing up the historical district records was earnestly pleaded by Sir Krishna Govinda Gupta, K.C.S.I. (Chairman), Mr. S. C. Hill,

<sup>1</sup> Bengal and Behar District Records, 1760-1790, in the Proceedings, I. H. R. C., Volume III, page 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, page 11, quoted.

Mr. W. Foster, Mr. H. Lutman-Johnson Sir Stewart Colvin Bayley, G.C.S.I., C.I.E., and (in a letter) by Sir G. W. Forrest, C.I.E.”<sup>3</sup>

The Indian Historical Records Commission adopted the following resolutions at their fifth meeting held in Calcutta in January, 1923—

“With regard to the records in the Collectors’ offices, the Commission will be glad to know what arrangements have been made by the various Governments for their preservation.”

This resolution was brought to the notice of the local Governments, and the following note appears in the printed proceedings of the Madras Session of the Commission showing the action taken by the Assam Government on this resolution—

“In Assam the old records in charge of the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup are being sorted.”<sup>4</sup>

This is certainly a move in the right direction, but I would like to say that mere sorting is not sufficient, and that the records lying in the offices of the District, Divisional and Provincial headquarters in Assam have not as yet elicited their due share of attention. In order to render the records really useful for historical investigation, they should be properly classified in order of their subject-matter or chronology. Digests should be prepared, and a handbook be compiled and printed so that investigators may consult the records they want with the permission of the authorities, as has been done in the case of the records of the Government of Bengal and of India. Hitherto the Assam records have been preserved on the principle of their official utility ; but we should proceed a step further and deal with them taking into consideration their historical importance as well. As regards the destruction of records, the Sub-Committee of the Indian Historical Records Commission even advocated the discontinuance of the practice of destruction of pre-Mutiny records, and recommended the handing over of the weeded records to learned societies’.<sup>1</sup> The task of sorting out the records in Assam for destruction and preservation is generally entrusted to executive officers of the Government. Without meaning any disrespect to these officers, and knowing fully that Assamese literature and history have been greatly enriched by the labours of some of the members of the executive services we would like to point out that every one of the officers thus entrusted has not the requisite historical perspective, by which we mean that the importance which a trained student of economics, sociology, history, municipal Government, revenue and fiscal reforms will attach to these records might be lost sight of by the average officer. The records should rather be dealt with by a committee of experts who will represent both the official and historical interests. They should be placed in a central record room or handed over to the Assam Museum when it comes into being. Arrangements should be made for their accessibility to genuine investigators.

We hope the time may come when the benefactions of some public-spirited gentlemen or the generous interest of some influential officer will rescue the Assam records from their present neglect, and arrangement will be made for the publication

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, page 17, footnote.

<sup>4</sup> Proceedings, I. H. R. C., Volume VI, pages 167-168.

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings, I. H. R. C., Volume V, page 134, Appendix A.

of selections from them. The Government of Bengal and of India have published several volumes of selections from their official records, and the Government of Assam may be expected in the near future to print a digest of Assam official records and documents. It need not be said that without the intervention of Government the records cannot be brought to light, and their permission must be first obtained if any gentleman ever intend to consult the records for the purpose of investigation. When we remember that European scholars have been the pioneers in the field of historical research in India, our desire to see the Assam records unearthed through the mediation of the enlightened Government will not, we hope, be a cry in the wilderness.

We may close our remarks by quoting the words of Sir Hugh McPherson, uttered in connection with the Buchanan manuscripts lying neglected and forgotten in the India Office, which will be a source of inspiration to those who ever intend to resuscitate the official records of Assam—

“When one considers the amount of money, time and labour that was expended on the original survey, one cannot but regret that so much of the fruits of all this expenditure has lain for a hundred years buried and forgotten amongst the records of the India Office. When one further considers the amount of ephemeral literature that is annually published in India at the expense of Government, it is surely a sad anomaly that this precious storehouse of information should be treated with neglect”.

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## APPENDIX B

*Agreement between the East India Company and Gaurinath Singha*

Kolliabar, 12th February, 1794

Agreement entered into with the Surgu Deo

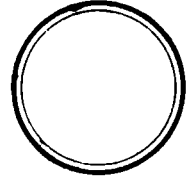
The Burra Fogan is to pay from the Districts under his Jurisdiction from Kolliabar to the Candahar Chockey (the Collections of that place included) the annual Sum of One Lack and Fifty Thousand Rajah Moury Rupees towards defraying the Expense of the Hon'ble Company's Troops \*serving in Assam to Commence from the 1st of February 1794.

Thos. Welsh.

এই সিজ্বী ছাপ মোহর

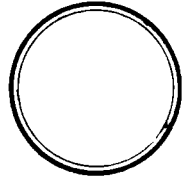
শ্রীশ্রী মহারাজা স্বর্গদেবের ।

The Surgu Deos Seal.



মোকাম কল্যাণের ১২ ফিবরেল ১৭৯৪ সাল ইঙ্গরাজী, বাংলা ১২০০ সাল ৩ ফাল্গুন কামরূপী সন ১২০৩ সাল শ্রীশ্রী মহারাজা স্বর্গদেব গিমেণ্ট করেন বড়ফুকন দিবেক তাহার আমলের মধ্যে ইস্তক কল্যাণের নাগাইদ কাণ্ডার চৌকীর খাজানা ছুদা তুটা সমেত রাজা মহরি ১,৫০,০০০ এক লাক পঞ্চাশ হাজার টাকা হেনরএবিল কোম্পানীর ফৌজের খরচ কারণ জে ফৌজ আসামের মধ্যে আছে। তাহার ছুক ১ ফিবরেল—করার প্রতি ছয় মাহাতে আদা বৎসরে দুই কিস্তীতে বেবাক দেড় লাক দিবে ইতি—শ্রীযুত সিবদত্ত বরফুকন ।

The Burra Fogs Seal.



ইসাদী—

শ্রীখারখরীয়া ফুকন,

শ্রীআত্তাবাম,

শ্রীকৃষ্ণনাথ গোসাই,

শ্রীকদ্রবাম চাৰিঞ্জিয় বকমা ।

শ্রীবিকাশাম মজুমদার ।

Witnesses

The Kargariah Fogun.

Kisstnaut Gossein.

Rudram Burwah.

Beeka Mozumdar.

Amount of sum to be collected by the Burra Fogan from the different districts for the year 1794 including supposed Collections from the Candahar Chokey :—

					Rajah Maury
					Rs.
Doomriah...	...	...	...	...	5,000
Kamroop ...	...	...	...	...	80,000
Derungh ...	...	...	...	...	50,000
Beltolah ...	...	...	...	...	2,500
Rannygong	...	...	...	...	6,000
Noadewar...	...	...	...	...	15,000
Chatgurriah	...	...	...	...	2,000
Chuttiah ...	...	...	...	...	2,000
Chardewar	...	...	...	...	6,000
Gillidary ...	...	...	...	...	3,000
Maingin Panbary	...	...	...	...	400
Dhing ...	...	...	...	...	2,000
Saatrajeah	...	...	...	...	1,000
Paunchrajeah and Babajeah...	...	...	...	...	1,000
Noagong ...	...	...	...	...	2,000
Corringile...	...	...	...	...	2,000
Chundorriah	...	...	...	...	400
Doorea ...	...	...	...	...	400
Candahar Chokey supposed collections	...	...	...	...	20,000
Total amount of collections ...					2,00,700
Amount to be paid by the Burra Fogan ...					1,50,000
Balance remaining for the Surgo Deo's ...					50,700

Thos. Welsh.

*Remarks.*—The above document, mentioned on page 15 *ante*, is published here for the first time from the original manuscript record in possession of the Imperial Record Department, Calcutta, with the permission of the Government of India, obtained through Mr. A. F. M. Abdul Ali, M. A., F.R.S.L., Keeper of the Records of the Government of India, communicated in his letters No.111 of February 13 and No.217 of April 3, 1928. The preamble in English over the signature of Captain Welsh is a translation of the material portion of the terms of the Agreement, embodied in the vernacular passage signed by Sivadatta Barphukan. This Agreement is highly valuable as showing the approximate revenues of the Ahom Government from Lower Assam representing the area governed by the Barphukan, which extended from Kaliabar to Hadirachowki. Bikaram Majumdar, an attester of the Agreement, is mentioned in Rai Bahadur



Gunabhiram Borooah's *Assam Buranji* as one of the envoys of the Ahom king, Gaurinath Singha, deputed in 1792 to Lord Cornwallis, to solicit the latter's help to suppress local disturbances. The statement of revenues realised by the Ahom Government from various sources, during the prime-ministership of Purnananda Buragohain, which synchronises with the period of the Agreement, can be reproduced here for purposes of comparison, from the Memorial submitted to Mr. A. F. Moffatt Mills by Ghanakanta Singha Juvaraj and others through Maniram Datta Barua Dewan :—

“Sairat Revenue including Commission Dastoree, etc.,

	Rs.
From Bungal Haut ... ..	60,000
Buttakoochee Dooar... ..	6,000
Solal Phat... ..	6,000
Gobah and Sonapoor Rahajagee ... ..	6,400
Gowhatty and other Hauts ... ..	12,000
Namsang Haut ... ..	5,000
Jorehath ... ..	11,000
Teeneemoonee Phat ... ..	3,000
Panee Mussooree ... ..	3,600
Fisheries ... ..	7,000
Panee Phat Kucharee Haut and other Khoor- dan.	18,000
Ferries, supposed amount ... ..	5,000
Total ... ..	1,49,000
Rajdhonee (Royal Revenue) Chengadsonhune... ..	4,500
Chooteea, Chatgong Kurreeapara ... ..	6,000
Authooreea ... ..	2,100
Chae Dooar ... ..	5,600
Jumoonamookh ... ..	5,000
Cacharee, Sonwal and Sonwal ... ..	21,000
Mureeas ... ..	5,400
Kullungeea, etc., Moodhees ... ..	5,000
Jaegeerec ... ..	44,400
Doors, etc. ... ..	9,000
Total ... ..	1,07,600
Grand total ... ..	2,56,600 ”

## AGENTS IN INDIA

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Calcutta.
  2. Messrs. W. Newman & Co.,  
Calcutta.
  3. Messrs. S. K. Lahiri & Co.,  
Calcutta.
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6 and 8/2, Hastings Street,  
Calcutta.
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& Co., 103, Meadow Street,  
Fort, Post Box No. 187,  
Bombay.
  6. The Indian School Supply Depôt,  
309, Bow Bazar Street,  
Calcutta.
  7. The City Book Company Post  
Box No. 283, Madras.
  8. The Director, The Book Com-  
pany Limited, Book Sellers  
and Stationers, 4/4A, College  
Square, Calcutta.
  9. The Manager, The Imperial  
Publishing Co., 99, Ry. Road  
Lahore
  10. Messrs. Chapala Book Stall,  
Shillong.
  11. Messrs. Sirbhumi Publishing Co.,  
Calcutta.
  12. The Proprietor, 'Graduate  
Union', Gauhati.
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Seller), 1719/2002, Mati Katra  
Agra (India.)
  14. Messrs. Law Book Society, 65/3,  
Harrison Road Calcutta.
  15. The Director, Benares Book  
Corporation, University Road,  
P. O. Lanka.
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