CHAPTER : 4
HISTORICAL PROSE WRITINGS
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4.1. Haliram Dhekial Phookan’s ‘Assam Buranji’:

Haliram Dhekial Phookan’s ‘Assam Buranji’ was published in a juncture of the social history of Assam. In the year 1824 Guwahati came under the British army. Thereafter, the Yandabu pact was signed in 1826. As the consequence, the entire Ahom territory directly came under British Company. In this time Haliram Dhekial Phookan published his ‘Assam Buranji’ from ‘Smachar Chandrikā Yantra’ at Kolkata. He was 27 year old then. In the foreword of the book it was said that first part of Assam Buranji i.e. the history of Assam. It is worth mentioning that the book was published in four parts.¹

The key objective of the book ‘Assam Buranji’ was to introduce Assam’s identity to the people of Bengal. We can trace it in the introduction part of the book. Haliram wrote:

[... till date no book has been published giving an account of the state of Assam. People from other states are just familiar with the names— Assam, Kamrup etc. but most of them are not aware of its history and geographical

¹ Page no of Part I are 10+ 86. Pg. nos. of Part II, III and IV are 32, 29 and 60 respectively.
² Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya (ed.), Haliram Dhekial Phookan’s Assam Buranji, Preface, P.1.
location. Now, the territory has come under the British. People from different places have migrated to this place, it is still on and in future also it will remain so. But, being unaware of the features and characteristics of this place, they will fail to demonstrate the administrative sagacity. Therefore, for the usefulness of all I have compiled and published this book—Assam Buranji.]

— Basically the book has turned out to be a mirror of Assam. The primary objective of this book was to present an authentic and flawless account of Assam to the erudite section of Bengal. It is noteworthy that the book did not have any sale price. It was distributed free of cost.3

There is no dispute that in the British Colonial atmosphere only, the writing of modern history of India in its real sense was initiated.4 It deserves mention that before the British era, in the Indian languages different types of writings were found that carried some elements of history. Historical facts are lying in Kalhan's twelfth century work 'Rājtarangini' and in other succeeding accounts of different dynasties and biographies. Subsequent to this, under the patronage of the sultans of Delhi different accounts of the dynasties were being compiled in Persian. Besides these, the literary works are there wherein the elements of history are often traced out. Bharatchandra Raygunakar's 'Annadāmangal' and 'Mahārāstrapurān' by Gangaram are two such types of books that merit mention.

In the very beginning of the nineteenth century we got written-history in Bengali prose. Against the ancient accounts of different dynasties, biographical literature in medieval period and eighteenth century 'Purān-Sāhitya' (Gangaram's

3. In early nineteenth century book publishing and free distribution of those became a practice in Bengal. It is known from 'Samāchar Darpan', 22 September, 1831 issue that below mentioned books were distributed before Haliram.
   c. Prāntoshini: Compiled by Prankrishna Biswas,
   d. Kriyambudhi:
   e. Sabdambudhi:
   f. Sabdakalpadram: Edited by Raja Radhakrishna Dev.
   g. Pāshandapiran: Umanandan Tagore.

4. '... common assumption that there was no history writing in India before the colonial encounter.' Partha Chatterjee, Introduction: History in the Vernacular, Raziuddin Aquil and Partha Chatterjee (ed.), History in the Vernacular, P. 3.
In comparison to Bengal, the tradition of history writing in Assam is much older. We have record of history-writing here since the thirteenth century by the Ahoms. ‘Buranji’ is an Ahom word. It means an account or description of past stories or events. Sunitikumar Chatterji used the word ‘buranji’ as a synonym for ‘history’. In the year 1228, the first Ahom king Sukafa arrived at Saumarpeeth crossing over the river Namkiu and the Patkai hills. Then itself he asked his pundit to make note of every happenings—“विम मने, याक पाने, बाचित वि कथा हय, पंजिथ दिनीखरक’. Since then history was persistently being compiled in traditional Ahom manner up to the first half of the eighteenth century. In the first stage these were written in Ahom and later on up to nineteenth century in Assamese language.

In the year 1800 for the first time Assam’s history was written in English accumulating elements from different historical accounts under the patronage of Dr. J.P. Wade. This book was dedicated to the then Governor General of India Lord Tainmouth. But it was not published yet. After this, we got the book by Haliram Dhekiyal Phookan. The Assam Buranji was compiled basically accumulating facts from the puranas and Ahom histories. This is the first published book on the history of Assam.

Haliram Dhekiyal Phookan was born in 1802. His father’s name was Parasuram Barua and mother’s name was Kameswari. Parasuram held the post of ‘Duwariya Barua’ (a frontier officer) and he used to stay at Hadirachaki, a

5. S. K. Chatterji, Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India, P.44.
6. Saumarparth was extended between Bharalu River and Dikrai River. See B. C. Allen’s Goalpara Gazetteer, P.18.
9. Hadirachouki was on the border of Bengal and Assam. The door-keeper had to inform about outsiders attack or other duty related goods from Bengal to Assam. And he had to pay a particular amount to the revenue exchequer. These two were the main duty of a door-keeper.
place on Assam-Bengal frontier. As this place was the major passageway for the communication of Assam with the Mughals and the British, it was essential for this frontier officer to have knowledge of Bengali, Hindi, and Persian etc. Gradually it became necessary for the ‘Duwariya Barua’ to know the English language also. The major responsibilities of this officer were to collect toll for the commodities imported from Bengal and to keep an eye on the movements of the outsiders and to report to the Ahom king of any kind of information relating external invasion.

Parasuram imparted education to his two sons Haliram and Yagnaram with great care. Haliram earned distinguished command over Sanskrit and Yagnaram learnt Persian also along with Sanskrit. Being the elder son, Haliram could not learn Persian as it was the belief that if one learns any ‘Yabani’ language one can not do the rituals after his father’s death.

In the year 1826 Parasuram Barua passed away. Haliram was just 14 then. During that time, Assam’s political environment underwent a great instability. Badanchandra Barphukan went to Burma and invited the Burmese to attack Assam. The Man army arrived at Jorhat. Being fretted at the Man invasion the citizens fled away for safer shelter. In the meantime, the Ahom chief minister Purnananda Burhagohain expired and Badan Chandra Barphukan became the minister. In this mayhem of the country Haliram was conferred upon the responsibility of Hadirachaki.

It is noteworthy that in the second Man invasion, (1819) Haliram too had to flee away from Guwahati and he took shelter in Goalpara and Rangpur areas. In that time only he got married to Prasuti, a daughter of Kushadev Adhikary of Ahatguri of Majuli.

The British force under the headship of Captain David Scott drove away the Man army. People hitherto stayed away from their homes started coming back. As suggested by Scott, Haliram also returned to Guwahati. He became a friend and chief executive of Scott saheb. Later on, he was conferred upon the appellation of ‘Dhekiyal Phookan’ by Ahom King Chandrakanta Singha.
After the Yandabu pact in the year 1826, when the areas of upper Assam and lower Assam were made two divisions—junior and senior—Haliram obtained significant responsibilities in the senior division i.e. lower Assam. He was a Chirestadar and was special in-charge of the Kamrup administration. David Scott had great faith in Haliram. Almost in all the times he took Haliram’s suggestion while taking any important decision. In this time Haliram had his second marriage with Tilottama (some say: it is Kalyani) a daughter of the Adhikar of Difulu Satra Labachandra Gohain.

Haliram had an acute sense of self-respect. Though he had a good relationship with David Scott, the same was not maintained with Mr. White. As a result, he relinquished his work at Guwahati and came to Kolkata. Then he went to Shrikshetra and again came back to Kolkata. During this stay at Kolkata he came into the contact of its erudite society. Here he apprehended that the people of Kolkata know Assam or Kamrup just as a site of ‘Dākini-Yogini’ (magic and witchcraft). Haliram compiled the Assam History to introduce an actual picture of Assam to the people of Bengal. It is said that through his writings only the Bengali society came to know about Assam. Before Haliram, whatever writings on Assam were available were simply the official reports and diaries of the British administrators there written in English. In this regard, Haliram’s book was very much original.

After his stay there at Kolkata, Haliram came back to Guwahati. In the mean time, David Scott died at Cherapunji. Mr. Cracroft 10 became the commissioner of Assam. He appointed the 30 year old Haliram as the assistant magistrate of Guwahati. 11 That time his monthly salary was Rs.230 only. But just after some days of holding this responsibility he died at Umananda hill. It is

10. He was known as ‘Kerikerapat’ Assamese people.
11. ‘... Mr. Kerrycrapt recruited a very eligible person to the higher post. There will be possibility of pleasure for the subjects because Phookan’s power and intellect was of unbiased nature. His power was similar to the Police Magistrate, which was above the bureaucrats and he had the power to give punishment to a person for criminal offence of two year imprisonment. If a corrupt person was given this power then that region had to suffer omnisous effect. Mr. Kerrycrapt was satisfied because that higher post was given to an eligible person.’ Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya (ed.), Ibid, Appendix PP.8-9.
noteworthy that in the last part of his life he started to live at Umananda with his first wife and son Anandaram.

Haliram’s short life may be divided into two phases. The first phase is under the patronage of the Ahom monarchy and feudalism. And the second phase is in colonial environment. He comfortably coped up with both ancient and modern state of affairs.

Haliram Dhekial Phookan was well-known in the Bengal of enlightened nineteenth century and specifically in the intellectual society of Kolkata. In his short stay at Kolkata he could earn a great importance and admiration from the Bengali society. He was introduced as a ‘learned’ or ‘erudite’ person by the newspapers and journals of that time. It clearly appeared on the page of the ‘Samachar Darpan’:

[He was not more than thirty five when he died. Although he was very young he was matured by his knowledge and intellect. His thirst for knowledge had no limit and he possessed a lot of virtues. He was very much fond of his own country and got immense pleasure when the Burmese were ousted from Assam and it came under the British. He left no stone untouched that could bring development and splendor to the culture and customs of the natives.]

The clash between the Hindus who sought to stick to the old rituals and the liberal faction in nineteenth century Bengal is well known to all. The factions were led one side by the puritan orthodox Hindus and the other by some liberal persons. As a result, the contemporary periodicals became the mouthpiece of

these two camps. But both the groups were outspoken about Haliram. The editor of ‘Samāchār Darpan’ wrote at Haliram’s death:

> किया त्वा हाल चंद्रिका और प्रभाकर के बीच त्रिविद्याविषयके अभ्यास तथा विषयों में अतिकात्तरादि अधिनिष्ठ । 
> से प्रबोधक काव्यानि हिंदु दर्पण पाठकस्य इतिहासिक व्याख्यान दिया। ताहाँ से हालियाम टेकियामल महाशय के लिखने अतिकात्तर निष्ठुरीक्षण चंद्रिका प्रकाशक महाशयके इतिहास का अभ्यास दिया। 
> हालियाम प्रकृत इतिहास नहीं रहा। ताहाँ ताहाँ इतिहास करिते हालिे बे त्रिबिद्या शिक्षणार्थिणे जीवने प्रेम पार्वती इतिहासी करिते हालिे बे त्रिबिद्या शिक्षणार्थिणे जीवने प्रेम पार्वती इतिहासी करिते हालिे बे त्रिबिद्या शिक्षणार्थिणे जीवने प्रेम पार्वती इतिहासी करिते हालिे बे त्रिबिद्या शिक्षणार्थिणे जीवने प्रेम पार्वती।

[Few times back some letters were published in ‘Darpan’ regarding women-education. Those subtle letters were published against ‘Chandrika’ and ‘Prabhakar’ in the name of ‘Kasyachit Hindu Darpanpāthakasya’ (one of the ‘Hindu’ readers of ‘Darpan’). If those letters were actually written by Haliram Dhekial Phookan then the publisher of ‘Chandrikā’ has to admit that, their editor was not aware of the fact that, to take initiative of women-education is against the Hindu belief.]

It is clear from this that in both the camps Haliram had infinite acceptability. Haliram was truly a liberal person. This liberal outlook can be traced in his lifestyle as well as in his writings. In fact, he could appreciate modernity that appears in the course of time. And without any dithering he accepted it but not at the cost of his own identity, existence and religion. In the first half of the nineteenth century he could do his own works with dignity and independently.

The compilation and publication of the ‘Assām Buranji’ was Haliram’s brilliant achievement. To write the history of Assam he dragged reference from the ‘purānas’. As a result, inevitably came the context of Kamrup and King Narak. In the first part, he gave an account of the ancient and present monarchy i.e., from the son of the mother-earth King Narak to the British regime. The part ‘Rajbibaran’ i.e. an account of the kingdoms starts like this:

> एই कामरप्रथम प्रथम ब्राह्मण पुरुष महीरद दान सर्राज दिया। ताहाँ ताहाँ राजधानी गृहावर्तार्थ अप्रिक्षणे बुई स्त्री अधिक अंग्रेज मोराको नाम पर्याप्त आछे, ताहाते छ। पर ताहाँ रूप्त

Here in Kamrup, Lord Brahma’s son Mahiranga Danav became the king at first. His capital was located in the hill Moiroka two miles away in the north-east direction of Guwahati. After him, his son Hatakasur became the king. Hatakasur was succeeded by his two sons Sambarasur and Ratnasur. No elaborate description of these four kings is available. Afterward Lord Vishnu killed Ratnasur and made Narakasur the king. Here I am giving an elaborate account of him.

It can be said that in his account of the part ‘Rajbibaran’ he considered the ‘Purānas’ as a source of history. Simultaneously he made use of different information from different Ahom histories. In his account of the Ahom dynasty he told:

The king Saukhunou was also known by the names Saunanginou and Saufrakng. His love making with a sister of the king gave birth to king Sukafa in the shakabda 1117. Here I give an account how he came to Assam and became the king.

Besides the puranas and the Ahom histories, he made use of different contemporary sources. The use of periodicals, various government records and above all his personal experience enriched his history.

Haliram’s history is not merely an elaborate account of the royal families; it is also a depiction of the different contexts of the social history of that time. From the division of the book into different part we can see how he introduced various aspects of society, geography and economy of Assam:

15. Ibid, P.27.
2nd part: administration, revenue system, courts, criminal cases, instructions, names of the Phukkans and dangoriyas (noble men), Ahom custom and tradition.

3rd Part: rivers, hills and mountains, borders, area under commissioners, names of the bordering countries, population and land area, soil, revenue system, coins, of Goddess Kamakhya.

4th Part: castes and tribes, God-worshipping, customs, health care, festivals, produces, cloth and dress, construction of house/building, jewelry, arms and armaments.

From the very list given above it becomes clear that by history Haliram didn’t mean simply an account of the rulers. He recognized history as a medium to introduce a nationality. For him history was not just a chronicle or annals but the means to introduce the life and heritage of a nationality. And this feature only made his history unique and distinguished one.

Bengali prose didn’t prosper yet with its own distinctiveness when the ‘Assam Buranji’ was published. Bangle prose got its maturity through the epistolary writings in pre-British period, the textbooks published by Shrirampur Mission and Fort William College in the early period of the nineteenth century, the debate taken part by Raja Rammohon, Mrityunjay Vidyalankar, Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyay etc. In this way, different genres of writing developed in Bengali prose.

In the first half of the nineteenth century itself, the writing of modern history in Bengali prose started. These were mostly translated school textbooks. In this regard, the books Ramram Basu’s ‘Pratāpaditya Charitra’(1801), Rajib Lochan Mukhopadhyaya’s ‘Mahārāj Krishnachandra Rāyasya Charitrāṅg’ (1805), Mrityunjay Bidyalankar’s ‘Rājābali’ (1808), John Clerk Marshman’s two volumes ‘Bhāratbarsher Itihas.,’ (1830-31) which were written in the first half of the

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16. ‘In the year of 1800 Fort William College was established in Calcutta, after event Bengali’s started inquiry about the modern history’. Nurul Islam Manjir, Bāṅglā Itiḥās Charchār Dhārā, P.1.
nineteenth century deserve mention. These books were basically written for the 
purpose of teaching Bengali language as well as national history to the students 
of Fort William College. Another stream of historical studies can be traced out 
that went on simultaneously with this process of textbook preparation. Sukumar 
Sen called this trend ‘independent writing’. He remarked on Haliram’s book:

अलोचा समয়ে ইতিহাস বিষয়ে একমাত্র চারীন রচনা, অর্থাৎ যাহা ইংরেজীর অনুবাদ 
নহে, তাহা হইতেহই হলিম দেক্ষিণাল ফুকন (১৮০২-৩৩) রচিত ‘আসাম বুরাজ্য’
(১৮২৯)। 

[Haliram Dhekial Phookan’s (1802-33) the ‘Assam Buranji’ (1829) is the 
only independent writing on history which is not a translation from English.]

Editing the book the ‘Assam Buranji’ Professor Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharya 
said:

হলিম রচিত আসম বুরাজ্ঞেই বাঙ্গালা ভাষায় মুখ্য প্রথম মৌলিক ইতিহাস গ্রন্থ বলিয়া 
চিহ্নিত করিতে পারি। ইহা লক্ষ্য করিবার বিষয় যে বাঙ্গালীদের প্রতি প্রার্থীবাদবল জনক 
অবালকশীষ বাঙ্গালা ভাষায় প্রথম মৌলিক ইতিহাস গ্রন্থ রচনা করিয়াছিলেন।

[Haliram’s Assam Burnaji can be recognized as the first original history 
book written in Bengali. Noteworthy thing is that the first original Bengali history 
book was written by a non-Bengali, congenial towards the Bengalis.]

A writer expresses its feelings or opinions through language and these 
feelings and opinions depend to a great extent on the subject matter. Language 
gets constructed on the appeal of the subject matter. In the language of 
Bankimchandra Chatterji we can say:

অতএব ইহাই সিদ্ধান্ত করিতে হইতেছে যে, বিষয় অনুসারেই রচনার ভাষার উচ্চতা ও 
সামান্যতা নির্ধারিত হওয়া উচিত। ...প্রথমে দেবিশবে, তুমি যাহা বলিতে চাও কেন্দ ভাষায় 
তাহা সর্বোপেক্ষা পরিকাররূপে ব্যক্ত হয়।...

[Therefore the conclusion is that whether the language will be sublime or 
ordinary should be determined by the subject matter. One should take care of the 
fact which language would express one’s thought best.]

It is worth mentioning here that Haliram's book is a non-fictional narrative. And it narrates history. The prose of history must be descriptive—this was one prime condition of such writings in the nineteenth century. Collection and publishing the facts were the main objectives of that time. With what objective Haliram wrote his book the ‘Assam Buranji’ naturally was to introduce the history. As a result he adopted the descriptive style of writing a book. Some samples may be given here:

A. राजविवरण:

परे ताहार पुत्र धर्मपाल राजा हइया कामरुप प्रतिपालन करिते लागिलेन एवं कान्तकुछादि

हेतु हइये उत्तम स्वरूप आनंदिया अनेक जसन करिलेन, आरो तिनी दीर्घ सत्तित कामना

करिया संपुष्कितांत्य स्वाभाव औ देवी-सूक्त लक्षातुर्दिप पाठ कराइया घिलेन। ताहार राजत्व

१२५ वहरू।

[B. राजशाही-विषयक:

आसम देशे राजशाहीदेशका रीति अन्य २ देशका रीति हुदते बिनिमया एईकं यद्यपि

एईदेश लंबातीविधी हुदयाए होतासी पूर्ण रीति अनेक चरितां आहे केवळ लयु अपराधे

गुरुसंघ ते छिल अर्थाः नासिका औ श्रेणिक द्वारा औ निस्सुशक ए सकल रहित हुदयाए एवं

मलिनमारक तहसील औ आदालत विषये पूर्णे मे निबिज्ज हुल लीलाभीमे प्राय ताहाइ

वीकार करियाहने अतएव ताहा० सूद तुषण लिखा आवश्यक येते हुक मे कोन व्यक्ति

एदेशे कर्म दीर्घसेंक हुइबेन कस्ती तविशेष ज्ञात ना हुइते पारिते तृतीये नैपूण्य)

प्रकाश करिते पारिते ना, अरुप लालितीया दुबरीति अनुभव व्यक्तिके कोन कर्मे

नियुक्त करेना ना अतएव ये सकल रीति लिखिते एईकं ले कर्मोपनुपुष्तहुदते पारे

ताहा एवं सकल लोको यथा ज्ञात हुइया अत्याबह्य ताहाइ लिखित। एवं इलंगतीयेरा

ये २ रीति परिवर्त करिया नूतन रीति खेपना करियाहने ताहायो तोषण लिखित।]

[Policies of administration in Assam are different from other regions. Though it has now come under the British its old way of administration still subsists. Of course the tradition of giving cruel and heavy punishment like chopping off nose and ears and taking out eyes for some minor crimes was stopped. The British sustained the existing traditional system of land and court. Therefore a brief description of those is necessary as one willing to work in this region and does not know anything of these will not be able to render duties properly. On the other hand the British don’t recruit anybody unaware of the existing system in the locality. Here those things will be compiled which will make one eligible for recruitment and are necessary to be known. Moreover the significance of those new systems introduced by the British in place of traditional ones will also be mentioned.]

C. তৃতীয় খণ্ড

আসাম দেশ ইংলিশরাবিকার হওয়াতে সৌমার কামরীঠাতে পূর্ব রীতিরুপে দুই জন কমিশনার সাহেব নিযোজিত হইয়া দুই অধিকারে বিভক্ত হইয়াছে তাহার মধ্য সৌমা লৌহিত্যের দফিয়ে ধনসীরি নলী উত্তে তৈরি যন্ত্র এই দুই নলীয়ীরা দুই কমিশনারির মহকমার এলাকা পৃথক করা হইয়াছে।

[When Assam came under the British, two commissioners were engaged to look after the already existing two divisions—Saumarpith and Kampith. These two divisions were divided by the river Dhanshiri in the south bank of the Brahmaputra and in the north by the river Bhairavi.]

D. চতুর্থ খণ্ড

আসামে শকট, বলদ, গাড়ি প্রভৃতি কোন উপযোগ দ্বারা ব্যবস্থায় তার বন্ধ করা রীতি নাই কেবল মনুষ্যের স্বচ্ছ ও নৌকায় দ্বারা ব্যবহার করা যায়। এই প্রকারে ইংলিশরাজীবী হওয়ায় মহিষ ও গকুর দ্বারা তার পূর্বের মহবন্ধ করা হইয়াছে ফিন্ন তাহা সম্পর্ক হয় নাই অনুমান হয় কিন্তু কয়েদের পরে ক্রমে এ রীতির প্রতিপল হইতে পারিবেক।

[The bullock-cart-carriage was not prevalent in Assam. People used to carry the goods on their shoulders and by boat. The British is taking initiative to]

23. Ibid, P.104.
introduce bullock and buffalo drawn cart. Though it hasn’t got popularity yet, after some time it will be accepted well.]

Therefore it can be said that through descriptive prose Haliram tried to introduce Assam.

From 1818 onward, newspapers and periodicals were being published regularly in Bengali. From this time only the use of Bengali prose gradually seemed to be acceptable for all.\(^{24}\) In this milieu itself Haliram started writing Bengali prose. As a result, the Bengali prose of these newspapers and periodicals had naturally an influence on Haliram’s prose.

Rajiblochan Mukhopadhyay of Fort William College wrote his ‘Maharaj Krishnachandra Rāyasya Charitrang’ before Haliram. We can have some samples of prose from this book:

> [Maharaja Krishnachandra Ray invited all the learned persons from Anga-Banga-Kalinga-Radh-Gauda-Kashi-Dravid-Utkal-Kashmir and other places for the sacrificial rite. On that auspicious day all the invited persons had reached at the venue of rite. Maharaja performed the rite ostentatiously. He made satisfied all learned person with riches. He got tremendous fame. All the learned persons adorned the Maharaja with the name of ‘Agnihothri Bajpayee Shrimannahārājrajendra Krishna Chandra Rāy’. He was extensively happy with the new title. Then he bade farewell to all the learned persons with the riches and

\(^{24}\) Sukumar Sen, Ibid., P.12.
he had been ruling his kingdom with mirth. He was praised from everywhere. His subjects also lived their life happily like there was no problem at all.

‘Mahārāj Krishnachandra Rāyasya’ was written in the year 1805. After this Bengali prose underwent a lot of changes. Rammohan Ray’s different writings made Bengali prose the language of reasons. Simultaneously, the publication of newspapers also gave Bengali prose writing clarity and lucidity to a great extent. Haliram Dhekial Phookan made his entry in this backdrop. Therefore it was natural that he followed simple Bengali prose, not that of Fort William. His precursor Derojeon Tarachand Chakraborty acknowledged this fact:

“I must conclude with observing that all things considered, the work does credit to its author. The zeal he has manifested, the labour he has undergone and the pecuniary interest he has scarified in the publication of this book, surely entitle him too much praise”.  

His prime objective was to precisely introduce an unfamiliar subject. That’s why his language happened to be simple and lucid. Examples:

A. परे ताहार धोषपुत्र श्रीहर राजा हইলেন। तিনি बिक्रम इহिया बड़हुद्र शके
रघुदेव राजा कन्या मঙ्गलदेह नाथीकै विबाह करेन। आजो तिनि राज्याधिकारों अदेक
सौरति करिया बड़ पालक बंग काजलिन्दु गोहारदिग्री बंश जागित, एই दुइइजन गोहारिन्दु
नियोजन करेन।

B. आसाम मनुष्यों उपर राज्य पूर्वे लागित स्वरुपित तिनजन स्वन् बिशेषे
चारिजन मनुष्या एक गोट पाइक नामे गणित हইल। आसाम राजार बैतंगारी तृत्य
चिल ना केबल ऐ सकल पाइक लोक खाटित ताहारदेह खाटिया अर्थांग गयं-हजीर
हइले राजा प्रतिगोट ३ टाका करिया वास्तिक धन ग्रहण करितेन काटियाँ अर्थां
अततत लोकन खाटिया केबल धन लोइया याइबेक एकतंगार काटिया धन लहतेन

27. Ibid, P.33.
In Assam, revenue was imposed on man also. A unit of 3-4 men was called a Paik. The kings did not have paid servants. These paiks used to do work for the king and if they failed to offer labour they had to pay tax for that. This system had varied types, discussion of which would be wasteful.

He never sought to be obscure to the readers. His intention to be lucid and understandable always worked in his mind. In some cases he used Ahom and Assamese words and idioms also. For example:


Till the end, these Ahom and Assamese words no more remained obscure. Haliram gave the meanings of those words also along with, which was undoubtedly the individuality of his style.

In the process of describing history, Haliram here told stories too. He made use of various associations of folklore. He intended to look into history in a story telling manner:

[Desirous of husband and son, an ordinary Kachari-woman worshipped God. Being pleased with her prayer, God Shiv appeared and told her that one person would come to her house and if she started staying with him she would get a son worthy to be a king. Then a Kachari man came and she made him]
pleased with hospitality offering pork and liquor. They exchanged their words afterwards and decided to stay as a couple. Later on they got a son.

Along with tales the context of folk-beliefs was also referred to in his writings:

अपने मातामही एकुणि कुंकरा अर्थां एकोले बुनाँट गिरा छिलेन; तहा भक्षण करिले पराक्रम हस से मते तिन [त्युक्तान्त] तहाँ भक्षण करिलेन।

[His grandmother gave him a pair of hens saying that eating hens strengthens one. Sukafa had eaten that also.]

This way his prose asserted to depict his subject.

Haliram was a scholar of Sanskrit. His book ‘Kāmākhyā Yātra Paddhati’ written in Sanskrit is an evidence of this. Not only that, it is applicable in the case of his book ‘Assām Buranji’ too. Mention of ‘Yoginitantra’ and quotations from Vishnu Sharma’s ‘Hitopadesh’ proves how much fondness he had for Sanskrit. Besides this, he had abundantly used Sanskrit words and syntax in ‘Assām Buranji’. Example:

अलंबणना, तथाच, एवं, तथाचोत्तो, उद्भूत इत्यादि।

Moreover the use of popular proverbs also made his prose lucid and simple. For example:

इत्यादित्वते नष्ट, मूर्खवस्तं नाजौरबसं, स पापिष्टा जूतोपिकं, स्रीबुद्धि प्रलोककरी, देवर लिखित कृष्ण कथन हृदयम ह्यान, बिनाशकाले बिपरीत विशेष।

Making the subject matter simple and understandable through the use of proverbs and words and sentences is a distinguished feature of his prose. At the same time, the use of rhetoric and prosody is also noteworthy. Some examples are given here:

अनुप्रास (Alliteration): आगमन विलम्बन निरीक्षण करत कुष्ठ हईल।

छेकुप्रास: परे किन्तु बलिन्त हइया ज्योधके...।

यमक (Yamak): धाराधर समागत हइया वृत्तियारा धराधर प्रायित करिल।

Some more features of Haliram’s ‘Assam Buranji’ are theoretically mentioned here:

1. Haliram Dhekial Phookan made use of complex and compound syntax in his prose. But the use of simple sentence is also not rare in his writings. For example: ‘তাহার স্তুতি বিবরণ লিখিতেছি।’

2. Like other contemporary writers, in his writings also one can find ample use of Samasabaddha Pada. He was effortless in the use of suffixed and prefixed words in sentences. Examples:


3. He was well versed in the use of Sandhi in sentence. Example:

   ‘ইষ্টিবাধনা’, ‘লুপাঙ্গানুসারে’, ‘জলাচরণ’, ‘পরিধানোপনুস্ত’ ইত্যাদি।

4. Haliram was engaged as the Dhekial Phookan in the western frontier of Ahom kingdom. As a result he was familiar with Arabic and Persian words. And for the convenience of rendering his duties, he learnt English too a bit. It influenced his writings also. For example:


   English words: ‘প্যাম্প কাগজ’, ‘কমিসনারি’, ‘বেলেন’, ‘ফি’ ইত্যাদি।


5. Though he used the punctuation mark full stop for long pause, it is worth-noticing that in some places he made use of semi-colon. But as a whole the rarity of punctuation mark in his writings is clear.


7. The suffixing of the plural marker ‘diga’ (দিগা) to ‘shashthibibhaktanta
"pada' (Case ending pada in shashthi) is significant. Example: 'ব্রহ্মদেশাদিলিঙ্গকে, ইন্দ্রজিনিদিগের, তীরহরবিনিগকে' ইত্যাদি।

8. Ample use of the word ‘Prajukta’ (প্রজুক্ত) to mean ‘hetu’ (হেতু).

Most probably, for these features of his writings only Sukumar Sen remarked with applause:

বাঙালী ভাষায় লেখকের বিশেষ দক্ষতা ছিল। বইটির রচনা উৎকৃষ্ট সে সময়ের পক্ষে অভাবনীয় বলা যায়। 31

[The writer has a good command over the Bengali language. The brilliance of the writing of this book considering the time is simply inconceivable.]

Just after the release of Haliram’s ‘Assam Buranji’, Jaduram Deka Barua wrote in the pages of ‘Samachar Darpan’ (1831):

... কোন ২ স্থানে কথার যে অন্যথা আছে তাহাতেই অবশ্য স্বীকার করিবেন কেননা তৃতীয় খণ্ডের ৭ পৃষ্ঠায় দৃষ্ট হইল যে আসামের পূর্বসীমা তেজি নামরুপকে নিরপেক্ষ করিয়াছেন আমি জানি তাহা যথার্থ নহে কতকটা ঐ স্থানের অনুমান ১০১ এফের পূর্ব দিকৃ পাস্কাই নামক পণ্ডিত শ্রেষ্ঠী সে প্রকৃত সীমা যাহার এক প্রশাস্ত প্রস্তারে মহারাজ ঢুকাফটিং কোই দেশের রাজার সহিত আপন সীমা নির্দেশয় করিয়া আশাম অক্ষরেতে গদ্য খোদাইয়া রাখিয়াছেন এবং যাহা ইঙ্গ ১৮২৮ সালে লিউটেনেন্ট কর্পার্ট সাহেব মুক্ত দেশ অবশ্যে গিয়া সেখানে আসিয়াছেন ইহাত তথা জানিয়া লিখিতেছি। 32

[He would surely admit that in some places authenticity or exactitude may be questioned. For example on page no.7 of the third chapter, though the eastern frontier of Assam has been identified at Tezi Namrup, we know that it is not the fact. The exact frontier lies with the Patkai mountain range where Maharaj Sukafa demarcated it from the state of Ting Foung and made an inscription on a large rock in Assamese script. Even Lieutenant Burnert in his visit to the state of Mung Kong saw it in the year 1828.]

Haliram’s ‘Assam Buranji’ was the first printed book of history. Because of this only, some mistakes naturally took place there. Jaduram Deka Barua

pointed out erroneous information. Despite this shortfall, the publication of this book comprehensively benefited the people of Bengal. It was clearly indicated in the journal ‘Bangadut’ edited by Nilratna Haldar (7 November, issue 1829). It was written there:

এ গ্রন্থে যে উপকারের সাধনা তাহা সহজেই ব্যক্ত যেহেতু আসামদেশীয় বৃহত্তে প্রায় এতদেশীয় অজ্ঞ বিজ্ঞ সকলেই অনভিজ্ঞ ছিলেন সম্প্রতি বিশেষজ্ঞ হইতে পারিবেন।

[The usefulness of this book can easily be appreciated as all the people here ignorant of Assam would now be specialists.]

This remark, made just after a few days of the publication of this book bears much significance. Because, in the first half of the nineteenth century, it was the lone book on Assam the Bengalis could have.

4.2 Tariniprasad Sen’s ‘Bijni Rāïbangsha’:

‘Bijni Rāïbangsha’ is a history book written by Tariniprasad Sen. It was published in the year 1876 from ‘Hitabidhāyini yantra’ at Goalpara. Printed and published by Shri Jagabandhu Samanta. Its price was eight annas only.

We can trace the mention of this book in the writings of Khan Chaudhury Amanatullah Ahmed. In his book ‘Kochbeharer Itihāsh’ (History of Coach Behar) he said that the book could not be found. Of course the book has now got reprinted.

The main subject matter of this book is giving an account of the royal family of Bijni—a branch of Koch kingdom. The writer Tariniprasad Sen told in the introduction:

বিজ্ঞানীর রাজবংশে আদি পুরুষ অবধি সমুদয় রাজপুরুষগণের বিভাগিত বিবরণ যত্নের অবগত হইতে পারিয়াছি তাহা লিখিয়া পৃষ্ঠকারে প্রকাশ করিলাম।

In this book the history of the royal family of Bijni up to 1874 has been described. In stead of starting the account from the time of Raja Chandra Narayan Dev (Bijit Narayan Dev) the founder of Bijni dynasty, the writer attempted to give a comprehensive account of the Koch dynasty from the time of its founder Raja Biswasingha.

Raja Biswasingha founded the Koch kingdom in the first half of the sixteenth century. After his demise, the efforts of Raja Nararayan and Sukladdhaj (Chilaray) successfully result the geographical and cultural prosperity of the state. It is noteworthy that after the death of Chilaray, Raja Nararayan divided his kingdom into two parts. After this division, Raja Nararayan and his son Laxmi Narayan retained the main part i.e. Coachbehar and Chilaray’s son Raghudev Narayan started ruling the other part naming it Koch-Hajo.

The state of Koch-Hajo founded by Raghudev later on became subject to two powers—the Ahoms and the Mughals. The Darrang and the Bijni territories came under the Ahoms and the Mughals respectively. This context deserves the mention of the fact that in the Mughal-ruled eastern India two types of Zaminders were to be found.

First is that who lost sovereignty and got recognition from the Mughals to rule there hereditarily under the condition of paying tribute and annual imbursements.

And second is the revenue-collector of the pargana i.e. Choudhury.

The Rajas of Bijni were of the first type. Tariniprasad depicted the history of this Bijni dynasty. Though on the whole, it is a story of the royal family, this book bears significance for us from two perspectives:

a. In the context of the history of western Assam and

36. ‘The King had no other way but to satisfy Raghudev. Thus he ascertained the Sankosh River as the boundary and he gave the entire eastern part by the river to Ragudev’. Khan Choudhury Amanatullah Ahmed, Coachbehārer Itihās, Vol.I, P.121.
b. In the context of the writings of original history in the initial stage Bengali prose.

The death of Parikshit Narayan, son of Raghudev, was followed an all pervasive instability in the state of Koch-Hajo. Khan Chaudhury Amanatullah wrote:

> সেই জনপ্রিয় রাজার উল্লিখিত শোচনীয় পরিসমার্থনে দেশবাসীর মন সহজেই উত্তেজিত এবং বিচিত্র হইয়া উঠিয়াছিল। এই অবস্থায় উত্তরকূলের অধিবাসীগণের হারা খুঁটিয়া প্রথমে বিদ্রোহ উত্তেজিত হয় এবং দক্ষিণকূলের অধিবাসিগণও অচিরেই তাহাদের অনুরাগ করে।

[Witnessing the disastrous consequence of the popular king, the people of the country naturally became poignant and frustrated... In this condition an uprising broke out at Khutaghat first amongst the inhabitants of the north bank and very soon it was followed by in the south-bank too.]

In this unstable milieu only i.e. in the first part of the seventeenth century, Parikshit Narayan’s son Chandra Narayan (Bijit Narayan) son founded the Bijni kingdom. Revolt of the native tribes against the Mughals and the Ahom-Mughal clash seemed to be the most common phenomenon of this region in the seventeenth century. Therefore it can be said that the very formation of the Bijni kingdom developed in the hubbub of a host of happenings and incidents. In between, Chandra Narayan died at his twenty two or twenty three. He was succeeded by his teenager son Jay Narayan. Tariniprasad Sen wrote in his ‘Bijni Rajbangsha’:

> খুঁজরাজ জয়নারায়ণ উপরত পিতার প্রতেক্ষায়িদের সমাপন পূর্বে পিতৃসিংহাসনে অধিষ্ঠিত করিলেন এবং স্বীয় বিদ্ব বৃদ্ধি প্রভাবে অধিচিত্তত্ত্বে রাজকর্ম পর্যালোচনা করিতে লাগিলেন এবং সংকল্প বৃদ্ধি পরাভূ করিয়া স্বীয় রাজ্য নিষ্ঠলিত করিলেন। এই রাজ্যের রাজা জয়নারায়ণ সুকুল ও নিরুড়কে রাজ্য সংগ্রাম করিতে লাগিলেন।

38. ‘Parikshit’s son Chandra Narayan, alias Bijit Narayan, was confirmed by the Moguls as Zemindar of the territory between the Sankosh and the Manas. He lived at Bijni and was the founder of the ruling family of Bijni’. S. K. Bhuyan, Anglo-Assamese Relations (1771-1826), P. 262.
Performing all rituals after his father’s demise, Prince Jay Narayan ascended to the throne and with his own acumen started ruling the country boldly. He put his opponents under his control and ruled the country with happiness and placidity.

Of course, later on he was arrested by the Nawab of Dhaka and there only he passed away confronting assorted incidents and disasters. In that time, Bijni state was under one Chatur Singh of Rajput origin. In later time, Jay Narayan’s son Shiv Narayan rescued his father’s lost kingdom with the help of the King of Bhutan and gradually he concentrated on the expansion of the area of his kingdom:

[Being defeated by Shiv Narayan, Chatur Singh proceeded towards Assam. Thereafter he brought Khutaghat, Habraghat, Sidli, Mechpara etc under his kingdom and ruled nicely.]

It said that Raja Shiv Narayan’s efforts gave the kingdom of Bijni an organized form. During his time the territory of Bijni kingdom from the western bank of the Manas to the east bank of Sankosh and in the north it started at the foothills of the Bhutan hills extending to the Garo hills. After Chandra Narayan

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41. Ibid, Appendix, PP.72-73.
and Jay Narayan, in the time of Shiv Narayan the Bijni kingdom gradually emerged to be powerful in the western part of Assam and Garo hills. Shiv Narayan’s Bijni kingdom did consist of the five parganas namely—Niz Bijni, Khutaghat, Habraghat, Mechpara and Sidli. Of course later on Mechpara and Sidli came out of the jurisdiction of Bijni kingdom and went under new Zaminder. 42 It is noteworthy that in the time of David Scott, the ‘dewani’ and ‘fauzdar’ authority held by the king were revoked in the parganas Mechpara and Habraghat. 43 But the king enjoyed supreme power in Niz Bijni. 44 All these details make it clear that gradually the geographical territory of Bijni kingdom tapered and the state-power diminished.

It bears utmost necessity to investigate the objectives with what Tariniprasad Sen was assigned with the responsibility to write the account of the Bijni kingdom despite its diminishing power and influence. In that time almost all the powers of the King of Bijni kingdom was revoked by the British authority. It is really amazing that this book was published under the patronage of the royal family of Bijni in such a time when all the powers exercised by the royal families across the country underwent decadence. So two reasons may be identified behind the publication of this book:

A. The fact of the ascending to the throne by Raja Kumud Narayan on 21 September 1878. Although the mediaeval opulence no more survived there, probably Raja Kumud Narayan, who pursued modern education, sought to concretize the thread of their legacy with a desire to project it before the British government.

B. We know that a strong tradition of history writing developed in Assam before the pre-colonial era. Sunitikumar Chatterji remarked on this tradition of history writing developed under the patronage of the Ahom royal families:

42. ‘About the middle of the eighteen century, during the minority of Debi Narayan and Mukund Narayan, Mechpara and Chapar were formed into separate Zemindaries’. B. C. Allen, Assam District Gazetters, P. 114.
44. Ibid, P. 56.
They had a sense of actualities—the historical sense: and they gave to Assam a unique thing in Indian literature i.e. systematic chronicle of a country or a dynasty or an episode, in a series of history books written in Ahom and in Assamese on the model of Ahom.45

There only the question arises: did the Koch kings imitate the path of history-writing of the Ahoms? If not, how can we have the instances like Suryakhari Daibagya’s ‘Darrang Bamshawali’, Dwij Birupaksha’s ‘Shiva Bamshavali Ba Bijnī Bamsahwali’? Tarniprasad Sen’s ‘Bijnī Rajbangsha’ is also a carrier of that continuity which tells us of a trend of the initial stage of Bengali history writing.

It is important that subject matter of this book is the story of the Bijnī kingdom from Biswasingha to Kumud Narayan encompassing over four hundred years. Important because, except a very few reference here and there historians are virtually silent on the history of Bijnī kingdom or western Assam. Some excerpts indicating reference of Bijnī in the history books of Assam and Coachbehar are given here:

a. এতিয়াহ বিজিনীব বজাব ফৈদ বিজিনাবায়ণে সত্তান।...বিজিনাবায়ণে বংশব বজাসকল কেবল নামাত্র বজা থাকিল। মুহল্মানব কবতলীয়া হলে আক কালক্রমে বিজিনী মানে নবব পাতি তাতে থাকিল।46

[The present royal family of Bijnī is descendent of Bijit Narayan. They were in power for namesake. They came under the Muslim power and incidentally lived at Bijnī.]

b. পলবীয়া অবস্থাতে বলিনাবায়ণে মুহল্মান হোরাব পাচত, পলবীয়ানাবায়ণ বজাব পুত্তেক বিজিনাবায়ণ, মুহল্মান নবাবে মানাহ আক সোনং নদীব মাজব বাজাত জমিদার পাচত। সেই বাজাকেরে বেজিনীবাজ বোলা হয়। পোটে, বিজিনাবায়ণে বেজিনীত তেঁব বাজাধানী পাতিলে। তেলিয়ারপরা তেঁব পলবীয়াল বেজিনী ফৈদ বুলি জনাজাত হস। 47

[After the death of Parikshit Narayan, his son Bijit Narayan was made the zaminder of the area between the rivers Manas and Sankosh. This clan of the

47. Padmanath Gohain Barua, Assamar Buranji, P. 135.
dynasty is known as ‘Bijniraj’. Later on Bijit Narayan established his capital at Bijni. Since then this royal family came to be known as Bijni dynasty.]

When Parikshit Narayan was captured by the Mughals, Prince Chandra Narayan was still a teenager. Though he engaged himself in battle against the Mughals it was proved to be ineffective and ultimately he accepted the charter from the Badshah. ...

At first the agreement was made to pay an amount of Rs. 5,998 to Mughal Badshah by the king of Bijni which was changed later on to provide 68 nos. of elephants. It sustained till the time of the East India Company. But it was found to be inconvenient and was reconsidered in the year 1788 to fix a rate at Rs. 2,000 against the elephants. The present land area of the Bijni kingdom is almost equal to that of Coachbehar.

From these references on the Bijni kingdom one thing is established that the history of Bijni is the history of almost the entire lower Assam. But its complete study is still a far cry. In the study of the history of Assam a particular dynasty constantly dominates i.e. the Ahom culture and tradition is becoming the focal point. As a result the comparatively smaller dynasties like that of Bijni are always remaining marginalized. Of course, it is to be acknowledged that at present some scholars have done some well-documented serious works on this subject.49

49. Amalendu Guha, Ambika Charan Choudhury, Shibananda Sharma, Dambarudhar Nath, Shanta Barman, Sanghamitra Mishra and others had discussed about his region in detail.
However it can be said that the history of Bijni is not studied yet completely. In this regard Tariniprasad Sen's 'Bijni Rājbangsha' is significant as a primary and original source.

'Bijni Rajbangsha' is an account of the royal family. Tariniprasad Sen compiled it in the request of Dewan Babu Gopalgobinda Sen. Though the book was compiled just to narrate the legacy of the Bijni Kingdom it bears significance as an original history book written in the initial phase of Bengali history writings.

When the book 'Bijni Rājbangsha' was published, Bengali prose literature had already achieved a kind of distinctiveness. In the middle of the nineteenth century, appearance of Vidyasagar and Bankimchandra in the literary world contributed to the articulacy or expressiveness of Bengali prose. In this period of the growth of Bengali prose we could find a trend of the writings of the history of comparatively smaller states or regional history. It is noteworthy that after three decades of 'Āssām Buranji' and 'Rājāpokhyan' writing of original history in Bengali prose became a regular phenomenon. Mainly from this period only the accounts of different regions or royal families had been getting published. Some significant books amongst those are given below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Year of Pub.</th>
<th>Place of Pub.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Āssām Buranji</td>
<td>Haliram Dhekial Phookan</td>
<td>1829</td>
<td>Kolkata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rājapokhyan</td>
<td>Munshi Jaynath Ghose</td>
<td>1836</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Setīhas Bagurabrittanta</td>
<td>Kalikamal Sarabhouma</td>
<td>1861</td>
<td>Dhaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Murshidader Itihas</td>
<td>Shyamdhan Mukhopadhyaya</td>
<td>1864</td>
<td>Bahrampur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Orissār Itihas</td>
<td>Shibachandra Ghose</td>
<td>1867</td>
<td>Kolkata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dhākā Jelār Bhugol O Sankhep Itiḥās</td>
<td>Anonymous</td>
<td>1868</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bikrampurer Itiḥās</td>
<td>Ambikacharan Ghose</td>
<td>1869</td>
<td>Dhaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Bhowaler Itiḥās: Dhākā Jelār Bhoweler Itiḥās</td>
<td>Nabinchandra Bhadra</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Dhaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kashibāzār Rājbangsher Itiḥās</td>
<td>Rajkrishna Ray</td>
<td>1282 (1875)</td>
<td>——</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sikkimer Itiḥās</td>
<td>Umeshchandra Ray</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Kolkata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Tripurār Itiḥās</td>
<td>Kailashchandra Singha VidyaḥBushan</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>Kolkata</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Bijni Rājbangsha</td>
<td>Tariniprasad Sen</td>
<td>1876</td>
<td>Goalpara</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tariniprasad Sen’s book is one of the regional history books written in the initial stage of Bengali prose writing. Notwithstanding, it has remained unmentioned in the ‘Bāṅglā Bhāshā Itihās Charcha Granthapanjī’ (1801-1990). 50 Even in the book ‘Ancholik Itihas Chhrcha O Granthapanji’ too the context of ‘Bijni Rajbangsha’ is missing. 51 ‘Bijni Rājbangsha’ was written in the second part of the nineteenth century in a marginalized town thousand kilometers away from Kolkata— the centre of Bengali language and literature. The book was printed at Hitabidhayini Yantra of Goalpara. It is remarkable that from this press only a Bengali weekly ‘Goalpara Hitasadhini’ was brought out. This press only published the first Bengali version of an Assamese book ‘Kāṅkhowā Puthi’. Therefore it is derived that taking Goalpara as its centre a world of Bengali studies was formed here.

Prabodhchandra Sen remarked on the first stage of the history writing in Bengali:

[The induction of history writing (1814-1905) developed the historical consciousness in the mindset of the Bengalis.]

During this period only Tariniprasad Sen did studies on history and compiled the book ‘Bijni Rājbangsha’. Sukumar Sen made two divisions of these historical studies. First, the translated works. And second is the original writing. Two excerpts from the remarks of Sukumar Sen in connection with the historical studies of that time are produced here:

A. উদ্বিগ্ন শতাব্দীর তৃতীয় ও চতুর্থ দশকে রচিত পাঠ্যগ্রন্থের মধ্যে ইতিহাসের আদর

52. Prabodhchandra Sen, Bāṅglā Itihās Sadhanā, P.12.
[In the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century, the history books claimed the most popularity and most of the native authors were keen towards that. ...The only original history of the said period which is not a translation from English is Haliram Dhekial Phookan’s (1802-33) the ‘Assam Buranji’.

B. ফুকনের পর নাম করিতে হয় রাজনারায়ণ বসু। ইহার রচিত ইতিহাস ক্ষেপীর রচনায় মধ্যে প্রথম হইল আধীনীয় সভার সভাদিনকের বৃত্তাত্ত্ব (১৮৬৭)। ... রাজনারায়ণের পর উল্লেখ্য ইতিহাস রচনিত হইলেন রজনীকান্ত পুকুর (১৯৪৯-১৯০০)।

[After Phookan comes the name of Rajnarayan Bose. His first writing was ‘Atmiyasabghar Sabhyadiker Britanta’ (1867). ‘Hindu Athaba Presidency Colleges Itibritta’ (1876) is a valuable book. Rajanikanta Gupta (1849-1900) was an important historian after Rajnarayan.]

Naturally, we can say that Triniprasad’s ‘Bijni Rajbangsha’ failed to haul the attention of Sukumar Sen whereas this book has been identified as valuable and significant as an original work in the first stage of Bengali history writing.

Proffessor Ashin Dasgupta remarked on history writing:

ইতিহাস-সাধনা প্রথমে অত্যন্ত সভার আবিষ্কার করলে। সেই সেবার শুঙ্খ হইল। কিন্তু মিথ্যা হবে না। এর পরের পর্যায়ে সেই সভার করিয়া সাধারণের মধ্যে নিয়ে যেতে হবে।
এইসব মিলিয়ে ইতিহাস-সাধনা।

[History investigates the facts of past and it necessarily becomes dull. But it can’t be false. The historians will have to add flavour to it to reach the audience.]

The reflection of this principle can be traced out in ‘Bijni Rajbangsha’.

A.১৫৮৩ খ্রী. এই মন্দিরের নির্মাণ কার্য সম্পন্ন হইল। রাজা উভয় মন্দির দর্শনে যার পর নাই সেবার লাভ করিলেন এবং গনাধর রাজকে স্বীকার করিয়া পুরস্কার প্রদান পূর্বক বিদায় করিলেন। ... টুর্ক জাতে এইরূপ পরম সুখে ও নির্বিশেষে রাজ্য শাসন করিয়ে লাগিলেন।

[The construction of the temple was completed in the year 1583 AD. He

bade farewell to King Gadadhar with appropriate tributes. Thus King Raghu ruled his country peacefully and with no conflict.]

B. বাটিয়া নামক জনক বোট স্বাধীনতা সমাধি সম্ভবায়ের দিন প্রদীপ সমাগত হইয়া বিজয়ীর রাজধানী আক্রমণ করিয়াছিল এবং অবলুপ্ত পূর্বক রাজ পরিবার গণমক সমুহ বিপাকবাহ্য নিপীড়িত করিয়াছিল। রাজা কুমুদনারায়ণের অধ্যাপন ব্যাক্তি কালে বিজয়ীর রাজধানীর নাম প্রকার পরিবর্তন সংঘটন হইয়াছিল। রাজ পরিবারেরা নাম প্রকার অনুবিধা ও উৎপত্তি প্রমুখ বিজয়ী রাজধানী পরিদৃশ্য পূর্বক কিয়ৎকল্য যোগীঘোষা তৎপরে তুমুলিয়াতে বাস করিতে লাগিলেন।

[A Bhot general named Zaula invaded the bastion of the King at Bijni and it led the royal family into a disastrous situation. In the teenage of Raja Kumud Narayan, the Bijni state confronted so many changes. Being inflicted by various predicaments, the royal family shifted to Jogighopa and thereafter to Dumuriya for safe stay.]

The ‘Bijni Rājbangsha’ was written in a time when the influence of Bankimchandra was a distinctive feature in Bengali language and literature. But the writer here followed the style of Vidyasagar. The reflection of Vidyasagar’s conscious attempt of narration is realized in the ‘Bijni Rājbangsha.’ The book starts this way:

[In the vicinity of the Himgiri at Sidli there is a mountain called Chiknai. In that mountain, a Koch damsel Hira conceived as the result of love-making with God Bhabanipati (Lord Shiv) and gave birth to a son Bishu who later came to be known as Biswasingha. He was the first of the kings descending from Lord Shiv and possessed amazing qualities of power and personality.]

The description helped to present the historical perspectives precisely. The whole book (containing one hundred and twenty six pages) from the very beginning to the last has been narrated in this descriptive language. In his article ‘Gadya O Padya’ (Prose and Verse) Rabindranath Tagore said:

ভাষার তো হাসের সহিত প্রত্যক্ষ রোপ নাই, তাহাকে মজ্জা বেদ করিয়া অস্তরে ধারণ করিতে হয়। সে বুদ্ধিমান, হাসের খাস-মহলে তাহার অধিকার নাই, আম-দরবারে আসিয়া সে আমার বার্তা জনাইয়া যায় মাত্র।

(Language has no direct contact with heart. It needs to penetrate the brain to enter into it. It is just a messenger with no right in the interior of the heart. Coming out, it merely makes one’s messages public.)

Lucidity of the language makes a narrative fascinating. Tariniprasad Sen’s prose is also lucid and is having a flow to a great extent. As a result, the social and political facts of the history have got expressed visibly in the book.

While narrating history, Tariniprasad Sen is intermittently concentrating on different myths and is telling tales from history. A long historical tale is given here:

রাজা জয়নাদারায়ণ সুধী ও নিরুদ্ধের রাজ্য শাসন করেন এমতকালে একথা ধূম মুখে হজম বিষয় বিধিবদ্ধ নির্দিষ্টের অন্যতম প্রমুখেই হক এক অস্তর ঘটা উপলভ্য হইল। একথা রাজা জয়নাদারায়ণ মশাখানীনী আহ্বান করিয়া মন্ত্র শব্দ করিয়া আছেন তদীয় মন্ত্রের ধন্যতাকে বিশেষ করিয়া রহিতে হইলো।...চরণ স্বল্প পরিকল্পনার গণ স্বল্প কর্মের অনুরূপ করিতেছে, এমত সময়ে একজন পরম রূপবার্তী গোপনন্দ দুধা বিভ্রান্তে রাজভবনের অবকাশে প্রবেশ করিল এবং সেই গোপ বধূর সেই গোপনন্দের দুধা আসিয়া অবকাশে প্রবেশ করিল এবং সেই গোপ বধূর সেই গোপনন্দের দুধা আসিয়া অবকাশে প্রবেশ করিল এবং সেই গোপ বধূর সেই গোপনন্দের দুধা আসিয়া অবকাশে প্রবেশ করিল এবং সেই গোপ বধূর সেই গোপনন্দের দুধা আসিয়া অবকাশে প্রবেশ করিল এবং...কর্মশালা দুধা বিভ্রান্তে রাজভবনের অবকাশে প্রবেশ করিল এবং সেই গোপ বধূর সেই গোপনন্দের দুধা আসিয়া অবকাশে প্রবেশ করিল এবং...কর্মশালা দুধা বিভ্রান্তে রাজভবনের অবকাশে প্রবেশ করিল এবং...কর্মশালা দুধা বিভ্রান্তে রাজভবনের অবকাশে প্রবেশ করিল এবং...কর্মশালা দুধা বিভ্রান্তে রাজভবনের অবকাশে প্রবেশ করিল এবং...কর্মশালা দুধা বিভ্রান্তে রাজভবনের অবকাশে প্রবেশ করিল এবং...কর্মশালা দুধা বিভ্রান্তে রাজভবনের অবকাশে প্রবেশ করিল এবং...কর্মশালা দুধা বিভ্রান্তে রাজভবনের অবকাশে প্রবেশ করিল 

59. Rabindranath Tagore, Panchabhut, P.98.
While Raja Jay Narayan was ruling his country with happiness and placidity, one incident took place be it as a wrath of the divine or an inevitability of destiny. The king was taking rest after having his lunch keeping the doors and windows of the room open. His caretakers were on performing. In that time a milkmaid with stunning beauty entered into the interior of the palace and with that only the home deity departed and evil forces crossed the threshold. The damsel appeared at the window of the room wherein the king was taking rest and looked through with her penetrating eyes to arrest the heart and mind of the king. The king got mesmerized at the sight of that magnificent beauty of the milkmaid and out of indulgence got stuck at her splendid face. Though temporarily he hushed up his emotions, ultimately the temptation was too irresistible to pursue his good judgment. He had to possess the damsel. The milkman-community of his kingdom got offended with the king and proceeded to Dhaka to appeal to the Nawab against the king. The king along with his family surrendered to the Nawab. The Nawab gave the verdict that as a purification ritual because of the sin he committed, the king would have to sleep in a cowshed without food for some days. They were provided with no food. But the divine power managed to keep them fed. When the Nawab came to know about this he was very much taken aback and ordered his men to provide the king and his family with proper food and accommodation.

Question on the veracity of this episode of history is natural. He has taken

help of folk-tales or myths while narrating the history and from the tales he has
told us an idea of the political and social conditions can be derived.

With the help of folk tales Tariniprasad Sen has told us history and
sometimes his story tends to be a medium of preaching of morality. Example:

[61] Sisters, be happy and never abstain from your service to your husband.
For a woman husband is the most precious wealth, he is to be worshipped.
Forget whatever misconduct he does with you in different times.]

In this book the writer has amply used the rhetoric's like similes and metaphors.
Example:

A. যেমন দশরথ তন্য রামচন্দ্র চতুর্দশ বৎসর বনবাসে থাকিয়া প্রত্যাবর্তন করিলে তাহার
জননী কৌশল্যার অত্যন্ত আত্মীয় পরিপূর্ণ হইয়াছিল, রায়াকে বিভ্রান্ত পরে প্রাণ
হইয়া রায়াকের জননীও তত্তাপ সুখানুভব করিলেন। 62

[As the return of Shri Ramchandra after 14 years of stay in forest made
his mother Kaushalya’s heart in seventh heaven, Raghudev’s mother also had
the same feeling to have her son beside her after a long time.]

B. কিন্তু রাজা বলিত নারায়ণ অলোকসামান্য রুপ্তি প্রভাবে অজ্ঞাতে গুলুরীকৃত
করিলেন। যেমন মহীখান সহোদর অস্ত্রশাল্লুই লাড়াইলে এবং অপর অবস্থায় অবনতি
অবলম্বন করে। রাজা বলিত নারায়ণও তত্ত্ব রাজলোকে করিয়া বল স্বভাব সুলভ
চপলতা পরিহার পূর্বক গোষ্ঠীরতায় সহিত নন্দতত্ত্ব অবলম্বন করিলেন। 63

[As the protruding branches of a big tree also bow down while bearing
fruits, likewise Raja Balit Narayan too gave up his childish manners after becoming
the king and acquired a kind of seriousness with humility.]

Along with the lucid and simple prose the writer has made use of
argumentative prose too in the book. Example:

63. Ibid, P.49.
In ancient time, the Kalitas used to be priests. King Biswasingha was not satisfied with the preaching of these priests and invited some Brahmin pundits for religious education and suggestions. He further commissioned to compile various books of spells and magic charm. This proves his crave for knowledge.

It deserves mention that Tariniprasad Sen acquired an expertise in description. Examples of his poetic language:

A. কোন স্থানের নির্বাক বারি কর বায়ু নিম্নতায় নিপতিত হইয়া পুরোবর্তী নিম্নভূমি পরিমুদ্র করিতেছে এবং বায়ুশিক্ষক সম্পূর্ণ সুন্দীত মারূ হিলালে শ্রমকরীগণের শরীরের শীতল করিতেছে। মহাকাশ সমৃদ্ধে দূষিলামান পাখা সন্ধর্ষনে রোধ করিলেন যেন তাহারা পিপাসার্থ পথিকদেরকে কর সকল পূর্বক তদ্রুম প্রদর্শিত নির্বাক বারি পান করিবার জন্য বারবার আহ্বান করিতেছে। অথবা ফুদার্গণকে সুপক্ক ফ্লাহার পূর্বক ক্ষুদ্র নিরুদ্দীক্ত করিবার জন্য অমুরোধ করিতেছে। অথবা আতত তথ্য পথিকদেরকে পুরোবর্তী শিলামণিমাত্রাবিভিন্ন সুন্দীত শিলা শয্যায় শয়ন করিবার জন্য সেই সেই স্থল প্রদর্শন করিতেছে।

B. ক্রমে বিবা অবসান হইল। নিম্নমণি সমতুল নিম্ন অত্যন্ত পরিশ্রম করিয়া বিশ্বাস করিবার জন্য অত্যন্ত নির্বোধ গলায় গমন করিতে লাগিলেন। প্রভেশ্বরন যেন হুহুশ রশ্মী শ্রম দূরীকরণ জন্য স্বর্গ মন্দ মন্দ বায়ু বীর্য করিতে লাগিল। পূর্বদিক রক্তচারণ ধারণ করিল, ক্রমে সৌন্দর্য বিশেষ ত্যাগ উপসর্গ হইল। বিশ্বসমকুল করিবার করিয়া স্ব স্ব আবাসস্থল

At a snail’s pace the day came to the end. After a hard labour day, the sun proceeded to the core of the realm of sunset. Darkness prevailed at the exit of the sun. Birds flew back to their nests with a bedlam of chirruping. Cows and their cubs returned to their masters’ place from grazing. All the directions were engulfed with darkness as if the absence of the Sun god made the nymphs of different directions melancholic.

The language of history should be lucid and clear. This feature is present almost everywhere in Tariniprasad Sen’s writings. Of course, the exaggeration in the description or the conscious effort to lionise all the members of the royal family is one of the limitations of the book. Some examples are given here:

A. In that time, the moving footsteps, the sound of the ‘nupur’ worn by the women and the exclamations of the inhabitants of the town who thronged to have a look at the prince altogether created a strange sound. It made an impression as if the town itself greeted the prince with exaltation.

B. The strike of poisonous arrows killed the soldiers. The piercing spears, found in Assam, propelled at great speed hit the soldiers of the emperor like the ‘Shaktishel of Lakshman’ slew them.

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67. Ibid, P.17.
68. Ibid, P.32.
In fact, Tariniprasad compiled history in a time when the scientific approach of history writing was not started yet in Bengali. History was presented in the form of story. The historian Mark Bloc remarked once: ‘a historian has to choose that style only that suits him.’ (কোনো ইতিহাস লেখককে সেটাই বেছে নিতে হয় যেটা তার পক্ষে মানানসই’). 69 This is applicable in the case of Tariniprasad too. The model of writing history in a marginalized place in the nineteenth century was to tell the story from history through narratives. And this is the path Tariniprasad faithfully followed.

Some other features of Tariniprasad’s prose are given below:

A. The use of ‘Tatsama’ words is distinctive in ‘Bijni Rajbangsha’. One distinguishing feature of the prose of his predecessor Iswarchandra Vidyasagar and his contemporary Bankimchandra is the extensive use of ‘Tatsama’ words maintaining the Bengali syntax as far as possible. Tariniprasad’s prose followed this style only.

B. The book ‘Bijni Rajbangsha’ has been basically narrated in two types of sentences — compound and complex. Of course he possessed equal expertise in the use of simple sentence too. Example:
   i. (Gradually the twelfth year has also passed.)
   ii. (He was a very devout gentleman.)
   iii. (The Bijni kingdom became kingless.)

C. Tariniprasad used maximum numbers of compounded words. Example:

D. He was effortless in the use of Sandhi too along with Samasa. Example:

69. Ashiskumar Das (Translated in Bengali), Mark Block, Itihas Lekhaker Kaj, P. 12.
E. Though he used ‘Tatsama’ words, some foreign words also appeared in his writing. Especially in the description of the last part of the nineteenth century he used the words like ‘লালকন্নী’, ‘কাগজাৎ’, ‘সাজওয়ালা’, ‘গভর্মেন্ট’ etc. foreign words.

F. In his writings the contemporary prose style can be witnessed. Vidyasagar and Bankimchandra used ‘মন্ত্র’, ‘পুর্বকর’, ‘অন্তঃ’ instead of ‘ইন্ত’ suffix. Similarly Tariniprasad Sen also follow this prose style.

G. In ‘বিজ্ঞ রাজবাংশা’, the use of scholarly style can be noticed. He used ‘ইন্দর’ or ‘ইন্দরেত’ in the sense of ‘হইলে’.

H. In this book the deficiency of punctuation marks is noticed. Example:
   i. ‘রাজা জয়নারায়ণ সুখে ও নিন্দেবে রাজা শাসন করিবে’
   ii. ‘একস্ত রাজা জয়নারায়ণ মধ্যাহ্বকালীর আহারাদি সমাপন করিয়া বিশাল মন্দিরে শাসন করিয়া আছেন’

I. The suffixing of the plural marker ‘diga’ (দিগ) to ‘shashthibibhaktanta pada’ is significant. Example: ‘তিহাদিগের’, ‘তোমাদিগের’, ‘রাজাদিগেকে’.

We know very little about the writer of the book ‘বিজ্ঞ রাজবাংশা’.
From the preface of the book it is known that he was an inhabitant of Assam. Ambika Charan Choudhury 70 also opined the same. He heard from Shashibhushan Fauzdar 71 that Tariniprasad Sen was an Assistant Dewan of Bijni.

‘বিজ্ঞ রাজবাংশা’ is a history book and naturally the question arises—what sources the historian used to compile this history? Tariniprasad Sen said in the preface of the book:

ঞিদীনীর অধিপতি শীল শীৰ্ষক রাজা কুমুদ নারায়ণ ভূজ বাহাদুরের দেওয়ান শীৰ্ষক বাবা গোপাল গোবিন্দ সেন মহাশয় বিজ্ঞীন রাজ্য সম্বন্ধীয় নানাবিধ প্রাতন কাগজ সংগ্রহ পৃথিব

70. Author of ‘কোচ-রাজবাংশী জাতির ইতিহাস এন্ড সাংস্কৃতি’.
71. Sasibhusan Foujadar (1883-1951), author of ‘বিজ্ঞ রাজবাংশ সংক্ষিপ্ত বুরাণ্ডি’. Recently ‘Shashibhusan Foujdâr Rachanâvali’ has been published from Assam Sahitya Sabha.
[Shrijukta Babu Gopal Gobinda Sen, the dewan of the King of Bijni Shrilal Shrijukta Raja Kumudnarayan Bhupa Bahadur requested me to write this book providing various old papers.]

Besides ‘various old credentials’ we can find the context of some other sources in the foot-notes of the book. For example:

a. Yogini Tantra Trayodash Patal
b. Major E G Glasier’s Rongpur Report
c. Buchanan’s Rangpur Report
d. Assam Buranji etc.

From the foot-notes given by the author we have got the context of the use of reference books and various reports or accounts. In which way the writer made use of the contemporary documents, the same way he used the aspects from puranas also. As a result in the very beginning of the book the trace of mythical history is realized. To describe the time before Biswasingha and his contemporary the author relied on the puranas only.

Simultaneously, he accessed primary sources from Haliram Dhekial Phookan’s ‘Assam Buranji’ or ‘various old credentials’. Besides this it can be presumed that the writer made use of another source though he made no mention of that anywhere. But the reading of the book convinces one that the author fused the yarns prevalent in the society with historical facts. Consequence is that history has got the form of a story here.