So little is known about Assamese Literature that I make no apology for giving the following second hand and somewhat antiquated information. It deserves better preservation than that afforded by a fugitive pamphlet long out of print.

In the early fifties a discussion arose as to whether Bengali or Assamese should be the official language of Assam. It was contended by some that the latter was merely a corrupt dialect of the former. Others, principally patriotic inhabitants of the country, urged the claims of Assamese as a separate language, and eventually carried their point. For years the Assamese language has been officially recognized, and now it can be proved that it is, in its grammar, much more nearly connected with Bihar than with standard Bengali.

The discussion seems to have been lively, and one of its products was a pamphlet entitled, 'A few remarks on the Assamese Language, and on Vernacular Education in Assam. By a Native. Sibsagar, Assam. Printed at the American Baptist Mission Press, 1855.' As may be gathered from its name, the book strongly defends Assamese as a separate language. The author commences by shewing how little Bengali is used in that country. He next institutes an elaborate comparison between the two languages, and shews clearly that Assamese, far from being an uncultivated dialect is capable of expressing the most abstract ideas of Science or Law. He finally compares the Literary History of Assam with that of Bengal, much to the advantage of the former, and as this is, at the present day, the most valuable portion of the pamphlet, I give it here in full. Owing to the peculiarities of Assamese spelling (especially, the pronunciation of s as h, and of θ as w) I give here and there (in parenthesis) the Sanskrit spelling of such tatsama words as will not be easily recognized.

'The Bengali can scarcely be said to have existed as a written language until the beginning of the present century, when the Missionaries of Serampore first moulded it into a form, Rajah Râm Mohun Roy wrote his Bengali Grammar, and other Native gentlemen, educated and trained in the sciences and literature of Europe, reared up, during the last few years, a distinct literature, by the publication chiefly of translations from English works on different branches of learning. The Bengali translation of the Sâkskrit Mahâbhârata by Kâti Dâs, and that of the Râmdyana by Kârtti-bâs, executed about a century and a half ago, may be said to be the only works of any importance in Bengali, that existed before the present Bengali literature sprung out from the efforts of Missionaries and educated Natives. Now, we beg to affirm, that the Literature of Assam was in the year 1800 A. D. more extensive and varied than that of Bengal. The Mahâbhârata and Râmdyana were translated into the Assamese language by Bâmsarasâwat and Sîr Honkor (Saîkar) nearly 400 years ago long before Kârtti-bâs or Kâti Dâs published their Bengali translations. The Sîr Bhâgawat and the Bhâgawat Gitâ were translated into Assamese, both in prose and verse, by different authors nearly at the same time; and not only were other principal Sâkskrit works relating to Religion, Medicine, History, Drama and other subjects, translated by successive authors, but a considerable collection of historical works of considerable authenticity, composed in original Assamese, and styled Strâfitâs, had, it appears, existed since the Thirteenth Century of the Christian era.

In support of these facts, we subjoin the following catalogue of original books and translations from the Sâkskrit, written in the Assamese language:-


The Srimat Bhâgawat, translated from the Sâkskrit in verse by Sîr Honkor.1
The Srimat Bhâgawat, translated from the Sâkskrit in prose by Kâbi Râtsa.2

1 I owe my acquaintance with this pamphlet to the kindness of Mr. E. A. Gait, I. O. S.
2 Sîr Honkor (Saîkar) the founder of the Mahâ Purânit sect of Vaîshnavas in Assam, who flourished (in the reign of Rajah Nara-nârâyana) about 400 years ago, and his contemporaries Bâmsarasâwat ātâs Ananta Kondoli
The Mahābhārata, translated from Sanskrit by Rāmsaraswati alias Ananta Kondoli.

The Bhāgavata, translated from Sanskrit by Rāmsaraswati alias Ananta Kondoli.

Gōvinda Miśra's translation in verse of the Bhāgavat Gītā.

Kabi Batna's translation in prose of the Bhāgavat Gītā.

Gūḍa Gūḍamālīnī.

The Kirtan of Sṛṇ Ḥonkor.

Dāhām (Dakam, or tenth book of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa) of Sṛṇ Ḥonkor.

Bhakti Ratīndōvalī, by Mādhābādīnī.

Bhakti Prāmānī, by Purośattamī.

Ratīndōvalī, in prose.

Ratīndōvalī Thākā, by Mādhāb Dēb.

Bhakti Prātiḍhā, by Ḥonkor.

Vaishnavadvīpihrīī.

Gōpālā Sinśāmanī (Kintāmanī).

Amulīya Batnā, in prose.

Gūḍa Mālī, by Sṛṇ Ḥonkor.

Lūḍ Mālī.

Bṛājīmadī.

Chapāi Tātāi.

Hāndīri Gōhālī.

Nō Gōhālī.

Kathā Gōhālī.

Dīpāk Sundā (Chandā).

Nābā Gāhā (Sidāhā).

Andāī Pātan.

Uāhāsā Hambād (Sāhūḍā).

Jānma Nīrmānī.

Jānma Bāhāṣyā.

Hānta (Sānta) Nīrmānī.

Kān Khōdā.

Prahlādā Sarītra (Charītra).

Bāṁma Sarītra.

Shyamsanta Haranī.

Rukmiṇī Haranī.

Uśādā (Ushā) Haranī.

Kumār Haran.

Bāṁma Kirtan.

Bāṁma Gūḍa Mālī.

Bāṁma Sarītra.

Mādhāb Sarītra.

Ḥonkor Sarītra, by Kaṁṭābhūṣaṇī.

Ḥonkor Sarītra, by Dōḥyārī Thākārū.

Dēb Gōpāl Sarītra.

Bura Bhaṣya.

Deka Bhaṣya.

Nāmā Mālīkā.

Būjāi Dāhām.

Harivangṣā, by Bhāwānandā.

Kriyād Śākara Viṣṇu, by Dēb Gōswāmī.

and Mādhābādīnī appear to have been the earliest writers in the Assamese language. The greater portions of the religious works mentioned in this catalogue were written by them, though the works of Kabi Batnā, Aniruddha, and others are also numerous.
In no department of literature do the Assamese appear to have been more successful than in history. Remnants of historical works that treat of the times of Bhagadatta, a contemporary with Rāja Yudhisṭhira, are still in existence. The chains of historical events, however, since the last 600 years, have been carefully preserved, and their authenticity can be relied upon. It would be difficult to name all the historical works, or as they are styled by the Brahmins. They are numerous and voluminous. According to the customs of the country, a knowledge of the Buraṇjis was an indispensable qualification in an Assamese gentleman; and every family of distinction, and especially the Government and the public officers, kept the most minute records of historical events prepared by the learned Pāṇḍits of the country.

These histories were therefore, very numerous, and generally agree with each other in their relation of events. A large number is still to be found in the possession of the ancient families.

In 1829, Hariram Dhekial Phukan printed and published, in the Bengali language, a brief compilation from the Buraṇjis; and in 1844, Rādhānāth Bor Baru and Kāsināth Tāmūli Phukan published at the American Mission Press, a somewhat more comprehensive work on the history of Assam in Assamese. A portion of the History of Kāmrūp has been also since published by the Missionaries in the Orunodoi (Arupādaya) Magazine.

The Hindu system of medicine was professionally studied in Assam by numerous families of distinction; and many of the officers in the courts of the Ahom kings were professed physicians. Some knowledge of medicine constituted one of the chief accomplishments of a well-bred Assamese gentleman. The learned physicians translated into plain Assamese almost all the principal Saṅskṛit works on medicine, as they were known in Assam. The Saṅskṛit Medical Dictionary, the Chikitsārṇava and the Nidān have been rendered into Assamese. In fact, the text books of learned physicians were often translated into their mother tongue for the use of beginners as a preparatory course for entering into the study of the original works. We have seen several works of the kind, though we cannot now quote their names from memory.

Dramatic Works.

The Assamese seem to be zealously devoted to theatrical amusements; and scarcely a month passes in the villages in which some of the dramas composed in Assamese are not performed in the public Nāmghora. The dramatic works having for their subjects chiefly some
historical events treated of in the Mahābhārata, Rāmāyana or Srimat Bhāgavata, are purely original productions, written principally by Ḥonkor, Māhab and their followers. The following list will suffice to shew their nature:

- Kangha (Kama) Baḍh.
- Kaiśa (Chhalan).
- Parījā Hat.
- Kālī Daman.
- Bāḍ.
- Siṭa Shayambor.
- Bhūján Byabahār.
- Rājsāya.
- Daḍhī Mathan.
- Patni Prāṣāda (prāṣāda).
- Bastra Haran.
- Kumār Haran.
- Piṣrīr Gūḍā.
- Rukmiṇī Haran.
- Shyamānta Haran.
- Siṭā Haran.
- Amṛta Mathan.
- Hara Mōhan.
- Siṭā Pāṭḍīl.
- Rāmāvaṃśādī.
- Gūḍhākāna Jāṭrā.

- Nṛṣingha (Nṛṣinglya) Jāṭrā.
- Tā Bhaṇjan.
- Durvāśa (Darvāśa) Bhaṇjan.
- Gūḍha Gajindra.
- Pātanā Busā.
- Cakrabā Bhaṇ.
- Kōhi (Kōhi) Bhaṇ.
- Jaraḥanā Bhaṇ.
- Byamba Bhaṇ.
- Pralamba Bhaṇ.
- Baka Bhaṇ.
- Aghāvra (Aghāvra) Bhaṇ.
- Mahāvān Bhaṇ.
- Edwana Bhaṇ.
- Kulāsal Bhaṇ.
- Dāḍhā Kṛishṇa Hambād.
- Bhaṇī Lokač.
- Gūḍi Pārd.
- Ajāmīl Pakhya.
- Kṛishṇa Nirjān.
- Bhīṣma Nirjān.

**Arithmetic.**

One Bakul Kaistha appears to have been the earliest and most popular writer on arithmetic. He writes in verse, and gives important rules on surveying. He also translated into Assamese portions of the Sāhākṛt Līlāvatī.

**Dictionaries.**

Jadurām's Bengali and Assamese Dictionary. This is a voluminous work, supposed to contain almost all the important Assamese words. It was written by Jadurām Deka Baru in 1889 for Colonel Jenkins, and by him presented to the American Baptist Mission.


**Assamese Works published by the Serampore Missionaries.**

The whole of the Bible was translated and published in the Assamese language by the Serampore Missionaries with the aid of Atmāram Shorma, an Assamese Paḍḍit, in the year 1813. A second edition was issued from the Serampore Press in 1838.


**Assamese Works published by the American Baptist Mission in Assam.**

[Most of these are omitted. They are educational works, and Missionary tracts and translations of the Pilgrim's Progress. A few important ones only are given.]

**Miscellaneous.**


The Orvādoi — A monthly magazine, continued from 1846 to the present time.
Scriptures.

Life and Gospel of Christ.
A part of the Psalms of David.

‘Assamese being the medium of communication with the hill tribes of Assam, the following books have been prepared with corresponding Assamese columns, or separate Assamese translations:

Spelling Book and Vocabulary, in English, Assamese, and Shyan or Khamti.
Do. in English, Assamese, Singpho and Naga Catechism in Shyan.
History of the Creation, in Shyan.
Catechism, in Naga.
Worcester’s Primer, in Naga.
Phrases, in English and Naga.

In view of the above catalogue of Assamese books, embracing such an extended variety, what shall we say of the statement, that the Assamese is merely a provincial speech, like the Yorkshire or Wiltshire patois in England; and that it is an unfit medium for communicating knowledge to the masses?

A large number of works, both original and translations, have not reached us, and a great many appear to have been so much scattered over the country, that they have never come to our notice.

The number of works, especially those of a historical character, that were lost during the late Burmese war, and the Muttnock insurrection, when the whole country was in a state of revolution with incredible loss of lives and property, must ever be a deep source of regret. But the list, above given, however small, wholly refutes the notion that the Assamese have no distinct literature of their own.’

THE DEVIL WORSHIP OF THE TULUVAS.

FROM THE PAPERS OF THE LATE A. C. BURNELL.

(Continued from Vol. XXIV., page 272.)

BURNELL MSS. NO. 16.

THE SONG OF KALKUDA.

Original, in the Kanarese character, occupies text and translation, leaves 230 to 282 inclusive of the Burnell MSS. Transliteration by Dr. Manner: translation from Burnell’s MS., checked by Dr. Manner.

Text.

Kalkuda Paṭḍana.

“Nṛṭṛ patty niwāḷa! Pṛṣṭṛ patty jājāḷa! Babipula-nallere kallāṇa! Malpiṅhīṭti pāḷi kēṇla! Maṅgālāṭā sāṟḷḷa pāppi pāṛi kēṇla! Mulki orbamāgāne pāppi pāṛi kēṇla! Bāṅṭīṛ sāṛā eṭme pāppi pāṛi kēṇla! Māṣāḷḷa hoblā pāppi pāṛi kēṇla jēwāḍye! Mṛugṛ munnūḍāḷḷa pāppi pāṛi kēṇla, yē!’”

Āpāgāṇe nāṇā patti nāḍṇuṇu Kella Puche Māṇṭrāḍi, appē ullōḷu Kāḷabairī, amme ullēṇa Sūwa Kalkude. Ākulaḷḷa pṛṭṭi māḷaḷḷollu Durgāmma. Āṭena samayogu eiyegu worti sangoṛi. Wōri Kalkude chėmbaṭṭaludd bēle bengonā; nāna wōri Yellūra Kalkude kāṛći kadhunṭtudda bēle bengonā; nāna wōri ullēṇu maratā bēle bengonā; Narnā Kalkude-ṛye chitrāḍa bēle bengonāṇo.