Seals may be an important source of history, and in the present work an attempt has been made to show how they can throw light on various aspects of ancient Indian history, both political and cultural. The importance of seal in solving the riddles of history can be shown by a few illustrations. D. C. Sircar once demonstrated how seals fill up the gaps in information supplied by stone and copper-plate inscriptions as well as coins. In 1838 we, for the first time, learnt about a king named Budhagupta, from an Eran inscription of 484 A.D. Then with the gradual discovery of inscriptions and coins of Budhagupta it was realised that he was a scion of the Imperial Gupta dynasty and ruled over a vast empire for about eighteen years between 476 and 496 A.D. But it was not until the discovery of the Nalanda seal of this king in 1943 that we could place him correctly in the Gupta genealogical table. Thus we had to wait for more than a century, for information about the position of Budhagupta and this was now supplied by a damaged terracotta seal.

Again, the city of Karnasuwarna, the capital of Sesaaka, could not be definitely identified for a long time, different scholars coming forward with different suggestions. Various sites like Karnagada in Bhagalpur, Barabhum in Manbhum Rangamati in Murshidabad, and Gauda in Malda were preferred as the probable sites of Karnasuvarna. The problem has finally been solved by a terracotta seal, which was unearthed in course of excavations at Chhiruti in the Murshidabad District. The seal with the legend, (1) Sri-Raktamrittika-mahavaiha-(2) rikarya-bhikshu-sangheyah, proved that the site of Rajbadidaga was the ancient Raktamrittika-mahavihara, which according to
Hium Tsang, stood in the vicinity of Karnasuvarna.

I have selected a restricted area, i.e., Eastern India, for an intensive and exhaustive study of the seals. I have included Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Orissa and also parts of Andhra Pradesh within this territorial zone.

Even then, I am sorry to note that it has not been possible for me to study all the seals found from different sites of Eastern India. From the archaeological reports, journals, and other works information is available about the discovery of seals from the newly excavated sites. But most of them have not yet been published with proper descriptions and illustrations and hence they are still not available for study.

Out of the numerous seals found from this region I had to select those which can be utilised for the reconstruction of history. For example, personal seals, both inscribed and uninscribed, of ordinary beings, have been collected in large numbers; but they are all not very helpful to the historian. Many of them have therefore been purposely omitted though a few cases of unintentional omission through oversight may also be there.

I have divided my work into three chapters. Chapter I deals with general characteristics of seals. Chapter II shows how the legends on seals can be profitably used in reconstructing the political, administrative, social, economic, and religious history. Chapter III is a study of symbols, in course of my study of which I have discovered some unique iconic representation of deities.
I take this opportunity to express my unbounded regard for Dr. D. C. Sircar, Carmichael Professor of Ancient Indian History and Culture, Calcutta University, who has kind supervised my work. But for his constant help and inspiratio it would have been impossible for me to carry on the work. I am grateful to Sri Mani Bhattacharya, who has voluntarily taken up the tedious job of typing. I am indebted to Sri Ben Sen, Sri Mrinal Gupta and Sri Asoke Sinha for preparing the photographs for me.