SOURCES
SOURCES

The people of the region under study possessed a special aptitude for recording the political milestones of their respective realm and times. Assam has its Buranjis and a vast body of Puthis, Manipur has its Cheitharol Kumbaba and a corpus of Puyas while Tripura has Rajmala. Parallels of such treatises can be found in the Tawarikhs of the Mughals and the Persians, the Bakhars of the Marathas, and the Yazawins of the Burmese, to mention a few.

Indigenous Accounts of Assam and Tripura

Buranjis

The word Buranji literally means "a store that teaches the ignorant." These archaic literary works were written on polished oblong strips of the bark of aanchi (aquilaria agalocha) by particular fast-coloured ink. These anthologies were compiled under the supervision of government officials, who were given free access to all necessary state documents – letters written by local officials, diplomatic correspondences, court minutes, judicial proceedings, et. al., to name a few.¹ A host of scribes, headed by an officer, likhakar barua, or superintendent of the department of scribes, was attached to the royal secretariat. The department of history, also called Buranji, was under the ministry of bar gohain (one of the three cabinet minister), and all the Buranjis and other important official documents were stored in Gondhia Bharal. A historian enjoyed the patronage of the kings.² Nobles of the court too complied Buranjis. Copies of Buranjis were acquired by

interested ones and were preserved as heirloom in their family archives.

The Assamese accorded to Buranjis the position of religious scriptures. According to them their future could be foreseen by consulting these chronicles. Even reciting portions of these treatises was believed to ward off domestic calamities. The preamble to Tungkhungia Buranji is illustrative of this fact, and it runs as following:

Salutation to Sri-Krishna!
Salutation to Ganesa!
Salutation to Goddess Parvatil
This is Buranji compiled in saka 1725 under the orders of the Duara Barbasua. Keep it secretly. Do not give it even to your son if you have no confidence to him. Pundits have prohibited the betrayal of princes: and if trust is violated it amounts to an insult shown to one's mother. So keep it in confidence; more specially it is an unfathomable Sastra, who ever finds its bottom? Even great sages become victims of confusion in such matters which I have handled with whatever judgment I can command. So pundits should not at random fault with this book...³

Therefore, Buranjis came to form part of the educational curriculum, especially for the children of the royal families and nobles. Besides, every well-bred person in the kingdom was expected to have knowledge of the Buranjis. Usually, family priest or any literate person read out the scriptures, explaining the meaning to family members or to villagers in public gatherings. These Buranjis were handed down through generations.

According to S. K. Bhuyan, hitherto one hundred and fifty Buranjis had been retrieved. Many more are still in private ownership; many are lost to obscurity, while several others have been damaged by natural calamities and fire. It is on record that Kirti Chandra Barbarua also destroyed some of the Buranjis suspecting that they made ambiguous reference to his descent. Many chronicles were also lost during Mir Jumla's invasion, the

³ Tungkhungia Buranji, p. 1.
Moamaria rebellion and years of Burmese devastation of the country, and during the first part of the British rule in Assam.4

The Britishers were the first who attempted to amass these scattered manuscripts. Rev. Nathan Brown and the American Baptist proselytizers, operating at Sibsagar, took up such work between 1840 and 50s. Sir Edward Gait, an oriental and antiquarian of high order, further pursued the work.5 He was assisted by the then Chief Commissioner of Assam, Sir Charles Lyall (1894). They laboured hard for collating archaic manuscripts of all kinds, which were historical in content.

Sir Archadale Earle, the Chief Commissioner of Assam (1912-18), also made serious attempts to gather the manuscripts of Buranjis. He commissioned Srijut Hemchandra Goswami in 1912 for the work. Hemchandra managed to collect a large number of manuscripts of Buranji, which were placed in the then instituted Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti. He later compiled and published it as a book entitled, Descriptive Catalogue of Assam Manuscripts, in 1930.

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4 S. K. Bhuyan, Studies in the Literature of Assam, pp. 60-61; B. C. Handique, op. cit., p. 73.

5 E. A Gait was one of the few British civil servants in India who rose above normal administrative duties and devoted time and energy to the study of the land and its people. He started his career as Assistant Commissioner in the Nowgong district. In 1891 he was appointed Census Superintendent of the province. In 1893 he was appointed Director of Land Records and prepared Revenue Manuals. By 1897 he served as Chief Commissioner of Assam. At the same time he was busy with historical enquiries. He was then transferred to Bengal. In 1901 he was appointed Census Commissioner of India. For a time he was also appointed as the Chief Secretary of Bengal from 1915. The Patna Museum was also founded the same year. The Bihar and Orissa Research Society with its well-known journal gave a stimulus to considerable historical research. He was also associated with Gandhi's enquiries into the conditions of ryots oppressed by the indigo planters of Champaran in Bihar. He also served from 1922 to 1927 as a member in the Council of the Secretary of State for India and as a member of Governing Body of the School of Oriental Studies from 1922 to 1927. He is better known for his monumental work A History of Assam. He died in 1950 at the age of 87. See P. Goswami, “Sir Edward Gait: Scholar Administrator,” JARS, vol. XIV (1960), pp. 13-20.
Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti, or the Assamese Research Society, was established in 1912 at Gauhati and is still active. It did pioneering works in collecting and translating the archaic manuscripts. It is, in fact, the pioneer research society in north-east India. Its contribution has immensely helped in reconstructing the history of the region on scientific lines. The institution, in its early days, had S. K. Bhuyan as its honorary secretary. It also had the benefaction of the then prominent scholars and officials like Sir John Kerr, Sir Edward Gait, Sir Archadale Earle, Mahamahopadhaya Hara Prasadh Sastri, and others. The activities of the society included, holding meetings, paper reading, publishing and exhibiting books and manuscripts, etc. The society came up with a scholarly journal titled, Journal of Assam Research Society.\(^6\) It is still in circulation.

The early Buranjis were written in Assamese prose and in the now obsolete Ahom script.\(^7\) But with the conversion of the Ahoms to Hinduism by around the late 18\(^{th}\) century, the present Assamese script took over Ahom as the language of the Buranjis.\(^8\)

The core subject matter of almost all the Buranjis is political. It is, in fact, an administrative memoir. Apparently, the authors of almost all the Buranjis have used more or less the same sources. The style of language used, the subject dealt with, and treatment of all the Buranjis show very close and striking similarity. Thus there is repetition of events in almost all the Buranjis. However, an event dealt at length in one Buranji is mentioned in passing in


\(^7\) Ahom is now an obsolete language. It belongs to the northern sub-group of the Tai group of languages, akin to Khamti, Burmese, Shan and Chakma. Ahom language has 41 characters of which 18 are vowels and 32 are consonants. G. A. Greison, the renowned linguist, writing in 1903, reported that about 100 people in the Sibsagar district of Assam could speak the language. See G. A. Grieson, Linguistic Survey of India, vol. II, p. 81.

\(^8\) The present Assamese script has Bengali characters, a by-form of the Nagari type of Indian alphabets, even though there is difference in pronunciation.
another. But one seldom comes across two contradictory information of a particular event.

The Buranjis, being mere narratives of political events, overlook the socio-cultural aspects of the time. The authorship and time of compilation of the Buranjis is shrouded in mystery. But it is generally believed that they were compiled between late 16\textsuperscript{th} and early 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Dates/years of events are recorded at frequent intervals. The historicity of Buranjis can be confirmed when one judges them and their relevant section(s) against the narratives of Muslim chroniclers, wherever available. G. A. Grieson, the renowned linguist, duly acknowledges the unique sense of history of the Ahoms thus:

The Assamese are justly proud of their national literature. In no department have they been more successful than in a branch of study in which India, as a rule, is curiously deficient – the historical works or Buranjis, as they are styled by the Assamese, are numerous and voluminous.\

Out of all the Buranjis that have come to light in recent times, only a few have so far been edited, collated, and published. Some of the Buranjis, which serve our purpose, are mentioned below.

\textbf{Ahom Buranjis}

This is a comprehensive Buranji of the Ahom kings. It incorporates the political history of the Ahoms since the inception of their rule in the Brahmaputra Valley down to the reign of Purandar Singh (1832-38). It was originally written in Ahom language, rendered into English by G.C. Barua and published in 1930. It gives an extensive treatment of the Muslim campaigns against Assam; commencing with the one made by an anonymous vazir, to the final defeat of Mughals, and the subsequent occupation of Gauhati and Kamrup in A.D. 1682 by the Ahoms.

\footnote{G. A. Grieson, \textit{op. cit.}, vol. I, p. 156.}
The published work contains the original text in Ahom language, along with a parallel rendering in English.

**Padshah Buranj**

This Buranj remained unknown and unutilized for a long time. It is also christened as the *Annals of Delhi Badshahate*, since it is primarily devoted to the history of the august Emperors (*Badshahs*) of Delhi. It is an assemblage of four Buranjis, believed to have compiled towards the end of the 17th century. The work is of considerable historical value as it furnishes an account of the Mughal rulers of Delhi. The work was written probably out of political necessity, to acquaint the Assamese with the history and manners of the Mughals, so that such knowledge could be helpful to encounter them. A brief history of the breakup of the Koch kingdom, till the occupation of Koch Hajo by the Mughals is also incorporated. The work also presents a concise account of the operations of Mir Jumla and Raja Ram Singh to Assam, and Mansur Khan's occupation of Gauhati. Interestingly, unlike other Buranjis, it uses Arabic and Persian words extensively. S. K. Bhuyan commented upon this chronicle in a series of articles written in the *Islamic Culture* (Hyderabad, 1928), under the heading *New Lights on Mogul India from Assamese Sources*. Bhuyan first translated it into English and then published it in five parts in the said journal between January 1933 and July 1934. Later, in 1947, he compiled and published it as a book titled *Annals of Delhi Badshahate*.

**Tripura Buranj**

This Buranj, originally christened as *Tripura Desar Kathao Lekha*, was a memoir, written in A.D. 1724 by Ratna Kandali Sharma and Arjun Das Bairagi, of their visit to Tripura between A.D. 1709 and 1715 on a diplomatic mission as emissaries of
Ahom king, Rudra Singha (A.D. 1696-1714). The main purpose of the mission was to establish friendly relations with Tripura in furtherance of his aim to organize a confederacy of the Hindu rulers against the Mughals. The manuscript is in the custody of the library of the British Museum, London. S. K. Bhuyan edited the work from the photocopy of the original manuscript and published it in 1938. The text deals with the history, topography, resources, and the customs of the people in the kingdom. Besides the royal correspondence between the rulers of Tripura and Assam, it contains a brief account of the events from the invasion of Assam by Mir Jumla in A.D. 1662-63, to the expulsion of the Mughal faujdar, Mansur Khan, from Gauhati in A.D. 1682.

**Tungkhunjia Buranji**

This particular Buranji, as the title suggests, is devoted to the last dynasty of the Ahom rulers, the Tungkhunjias, who were at the helm from A.D. 1681 to 1826. A member of the Ahom cabinet, Srinath Duara Barbarua, wrote it towards the close of the Ahom rule. It was edited and translated by S. K. Bhuyan and published in 1933. It is the only indigenous and contemporary source that chronicles the Mughal-Ahom relation after the death of Mir Jumla.

**Rajmala**

This royal chronicle of Tripura contains descriptions and legends of the kings of Tripura, origin of the royal family, and their reigns. It was first composed during the reign of Dharma Manikya (A.D. 1431-62) who engaged two Brahmans, named Sukreswar and Baneswar of the royal court, for the task. The work is written in Bengali verse. The first part of the work is believed to have been written in the early 15th century. It treats the traditional period of the Tripura kings, which is enmeshed up with various
mythological accounts. The work accounts the history of Tripura, beginning from the mythological period to the reign of Ramganga Manikya (1926) and Kashi Chandra Manikya. Rev. James Long made an analysis of Rajmala in the journal, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1850.

**Indigenous Accounts of Manipur**

Manipur too has a rich heritage of historical materials handed down through generations. The *meiteis*, who have had a strong sense of history, mastered the art of writing, and have kept records of the events in the form of royal chronicles, clan genealogies, immigration books, etc., collectively called *Puyas* (archaic texts). These texts are generally kept in the custody of the *pibas* (eldest male line of a clan) or *pundits*. They are written in archaic Manipuri script, mostly on *agar pak* (*agolocha*), though some are found written on Manipuri hand-made paper with Meitei *muk* (Manipuri ink) prepared by *tengali* (lamp black) and *cha* (lac).

**Cheitharol Kumbaba**

The Manipuri version of *Buranjis*, written originally in Meitei script, forms the backbone of the history of Manipur. Royal scribes made entries from time to time of the daily events, covering the reign of seventy-eight kings, from the earliest mythological period to the dawn of 20th century. It mainly records the military and political exploits of the rulers and the affairs at the court. Thus, it deals mostly with matters, which did not concern the general public; scant attention being paid to the socio-economic conditions of the Manipuris. Unfortunately, there are hardly any entries about the Muslims, except the reference of the Muslim captives, captured by king Khagemba in A.D. 1606.

The chronicle was for the first time translated and edited by Pandit Thongam Madhob Singh and published by Visvabharti
Mandir. Later, with permission from king Churachand Singh, (1891-1941) the chronicle was edited by L. M. Iboongohal Singh and N. Khelchandra Singh, and published by the Manipuri Sahitya Parishad in 1967.

**Nongasmei and Pangal Thorakpa**

The Manipuris also made it a point to retain written accounts of immigrants. For example, migration and the origin of the people from mainland India are described in *Nongchup (west) Haram*. The account, which deals with the advent of the Burmese and Chinese, is known as *Nongpok (east) Haram*.

*Nongasmei* and *Pangal Thorakpa* are two such *Puyas*, which has also the characteristics of a chronicle (*kumbaba*), as both contain the accounts of kings from Khagemba down to Chingthangkhomba (A.D. 1759-98). Both extensively deal with the advent of Muslims and their subsequent settlement in the valley of Manipur. It also gives an account of the immigration of the batches of Muslims. Besides, the work is devoted to recounting the achievements of king Khagemba in his historic battles with the Cacharis and the Muslim mercenaries, the Burmese and the tribes in the adjoining hills. The two *Puyas* are written in almost similar fashion covering the same period. But the narrative of *Nongsamei* is fuller and more systematic than that of *Pangal Thorakpa*. In the latter, the account is quite scrappy.

There is paucity of information regarding the authorship and period of the composition of these *Puyas*. However, *Nongsamei* is believed to have been written by one Leirikyengbam (Jag Singh) Nongsamei, a soldier who participated in the Manipuri-Muslim conflict of A.D. 1606. The *Puya* was co-edited by M. A. Janab and O. Bhogeshwar Singh and published in 1973. *Pangal Thorakpa* was edited by R. K. Sanahal Singh, and published in 1985. The
manuscript of this *Puya* was retrieved from Pandit Nongmairakpam Dinachandra Singha.

**Muslim Accounts**

Over and above the indigenous sources, there are the Persian sources. The indigenous sources can be correlated and at the same time better judged by comparing them with these contemporary Muslim accounts. In fact, a study of the Persian chronicles is indispensable. The Muslim accounts also throw light upon many dark corners in the history of area under review. Even though the *Buranjis* and other indigenous sources give a more or less comprehensive account of the events with nearest accuracy, their description, is primarily confined to the 16th and 17th century.

Traditionally Muslim monarchs employed chroniclers, diarists and court historians, who maintained profuse records of their activities, very often in systematic and chronological order, though at times exaggerated. These scholars produced books and composed *masnavis* on the dynastic and regional histories of the kingdom. They also penned biographical sketches of the high and low and recorded historical anecdotes and chronological accounts of events, private or public. They wrote not only for literary fame, or reward but also to quench their intellectual hunger and inner urge for writing their observations and experiences. The educated among the rulers and nobility also wrote memoirs or maintained personal diaries. Historiography, therefore, flourished in all of its form during the Muslim rule. References to the history of Muslim relation with north-eastern rulers, especially of Assam and Tripura are found in bits and pieces in their works. Some of the specific works are dealt below.
Tabaqat-i-Nasiri

This is a voluminous work by Minhaj-us-Siraj, who served as the chief qazi of Delhi during the reign of Iltutmish. On the deposition of Sultan Behram Shah (A.D. 1240-42), Minhaj resigned the post and moved to Bengal, whose ruler had by then declared himself independent of Delhi. He stayed at Lakhnauti for over two years as courtier of the regional ruler. Thereafter, he returned to Delhi and was conferred the principalship of the Nasiriya madrasah. He later became the chief qazi and sadr-i-iahan under Nasiruddin Mahmud's reign. The work is a collection of 23 slim volumes of the history of Islamic world. The portions of the work, which relates to India (Books 11, 17 to 22), were printed in the Bibliotheca Indica under the supervision of Major W. N. Lees in a separate volume of 450 pages, in 1863-64. H. G. Raverty later translated the work in English. The work is well annotated.

The section relating to Muhammad Bakhtiyar's ill-fated conquest of Tibet and his defeat at the hands of the ruler of Kamarupa is well accounted. The author laboured hard for collecting the material from all the available sources and devoted many years in giving-it a shape. Minhaj collected and learned facts about Muhammad Bahktiyar's campaign from Muatmid Addowlah, one of the officers who attended the general, while he had his sojourn in Bengal. Moreover he conversed with many persons who took part in the campaign, before he wrote his treatise.

Kitab-ur-Rehla

This work is a travelogue of the Moroccan globetrotter Ibn Battuta. He left his home in A.D. 1325 on a life-tour of the world. After passing through the countries of northern Africa and the Arabian Peninsula he reached Sindh in A.D. 1333, from where he proceeded to Delhi. Muhammad Bin Tughluq, who appointed him as the qazi of Delhi, extended him patronage. He served for eight
years and visited parts of eastern India. It was on his way to Tibet that he visited the **khanqah** of Shah Shaikh Jalal to received blessings. He has left an interesting account of his meeting with the saint, Shah Jalal Mujjarid. The manuscript, originally written in Arabic, was translated into English by A. Mahdi Hussain, as *The Rehla of Ibn Battuta* (1953). H. A. E. R. Gibb came up with an abridged translation in 1929.

**AkbarNama**

This monumental work of Abul Fazl – who has left an indelible mark on the tradition of historiography – is an important contemporary source. The work translated and edited by H. Bevridge gives a casual, but valuable glimpse of the opening of the first phase of Mughal policy towards north-east by Emperor Akbar and the history of the division of the Koch kingdom.

**Padishahnamah**

It is the official chronicle of the first 20 years of Emperor Shah Jahan's reign, written by Abdul Hamid Lahori. It sheds light on the history of Assam, Koch Behar, and Koch Hajo. His account relates the internecine conflict between Lakshmi Narayan of Koch Behar and Parikshit Narayan of Koch Hajo; imprisonment of Pasikshit by the Mughals and their mutual hostility; Islam Khan’s aggressive imperialism towards Koch Hajo; and the conflict between Bali Narayan and the Mughals. The narrative also exhaustively deals with the military expeditions of Mukarram Khan, Abu Bakr, Abdus Salam, and others towards Assam.

**Fathiyah-i-Ibriyah**

Also known as *Tarikh Fath-i-Asham* (History of the Conquest of Assam), this account was written by Ibn Muhammad Wali or Shihabuddin Talish in the years A.D. 1662-63. Talish was in the service of Mir Jumla. He accompanied Mir Jumla’s campaign of
Assam in A.D. 1662, most likely as a clerk. The work is an eyewitness account of the campaign. In fact, he is the only author of the various Persian works who had personally visited north-east. This manuscript of roughly 19 pages, gives a graphic description of the campaign of the country. Interwoven with the narrative is a valuable sketch of Assam – its geography, natural resources, their rulers and people, along with its social, political, economic and military conditions. *Fathiyah-i-Ibriyah* consists of a short preface, an introduction (*muqaddimah*) and is divided into two parts (*maqalah*). The introduction evaluates the causes that led to the invasion of Koch Bihar and Assam. The first part relates to the conquest of Koch Bihar and the general condition of the country. The second part narrates the invasion of Assam by Mir Jumla, and its occupation for fourteen months (January A.D. 1662 – February A.D. 1663); the peace agreement; and the return of the military commanders to Khizrpur near Dacca (where he died shortly after, on 30th March A.D. 1663). The second part is divided into 17 chapters, of which the sixth is particularly interesting as it contains a description of Assam and the Assamese.

There are several accounts of the expedition of Mir Jumla in Assam, but this is one of the most authentic versions. The British Museum and the Asiatic Society of Bengal possess manuscript of this work, which was published in Calcutta in 1848-49 by Masihuddin Khan, a *munshi* of the Foreign Department.10 H. Blochmann (*JASB*, vol. XLI, 1872) undertook a partial translation of this work in English. Jadunath Sarkar, after finding faults in Blochmann's translation, retranslated the section that deals with the Assam and its inhabitants, as "Assam and the Ahoms in 1660

10 The manuscript was recovered in Stewart's catalogue. Another copy of the manuscript is in the library of the * Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Calcutta. See H. M. Elliot & J. Downson, *History of India as Told by his Historians*, vol. VII, p.199.

**Alamgirnama**

It is a court chronicle, written by Mirza Muhammed Kazim. The work covers the first decade of Aurangzeb's reign. A very casual reference is provided with regard to the Ahom-Mughal conflict of A.D. 1636-38, which saw the renewal of aggressive policy towards Koch Behar and Assam under Mir Jumla and its disastrous end. Like the work of Talish the author succinctly delineates the region. H. Vansittart translated the relevant portion into English under the title, “A Description of Assam by Md. Cazim” (Asiatic Researches, vol. 2, 1979).

**Riyaz-us-Salatin**

This is a Persian work meaning “Garden of Kings,” and its authorship is credited to Ghulam Hussain Salim, a resident of Zaidpur in Qudh, who later migrated to Maldah in Bengal, and held the office of Post Master (dak munshi) under Mr. George Udny. The work was completed in A.D. 1788. It was published in the Bibliotheca India Series, 1898, and later translated by Abdus Salam and published in 1904. The work was written with deep erudition and mastery of facts. The work, besides the general history of Bengal, casually refers to the relations of the Mughal viceroy and rulers of Bengal with the Koches, Ahoms, and Tripuris. The author gives a connected summary, based on published materials of the Mughal period and the local tradition, which he could gather at Maldah. Besides, the translator has taken great pain in correlating the events by annotating.
Baharistan-i-Ghaibi

It is a voluminous Persian work written by Mirza Nathan, also known as Shitab Khan. He was in the service of the Mughal; deputed in the newly conquered province of Kamrup by Emperor Jahangir. He was an eyewitness and a participant in the events he records. It is in general a work devoted to the history of Bengal and Orissa. Baharistan-i-Ghaibi deals exclusively with the history of Bengal. It is divided into four daftars (books). The first book deals with the events of Islam Khan’s reign, and is named aptly Islamnamah; the second book deals with Qasim Khan’s reign: the third is on Ibrahim Khan Fath-Jang, and is titled Ibrahimnamah; the last book is about the coup against the Bengal government by Shah Jahan, and is titled Waqiat-i-Jahan Shah or “The Chronicles of Shah Jahan.” It gives an account of the reduction of Koch Behar to a tributary vassalage and the conquest of Koch Hajo and an abortive campaign against Assam. It also accounts the first Mughal campaign towards Tripura during the reign of Jahangir. The narrative is fuller and better connected than others.

Travelogues

Besides the indigenous and Persian accounts, the travelogues of the European travellers and adventurers serve as invaluable source for us. Mention must be made of Francois Bernier’s Travels in the Moghul Empire 1653-1708, translated by Vincent A. Smith, and Niccolai Venetian Mannuci’s Storia do Mogor (1653-1708), translated by William Irvine. In these works brief references are made to Mughal campaigns against Assam.

Special mention must be made of the account of an unnamed Dutch sailor regarding Mir Jumla’s Assam campaign. He was ship-wrecked on an island off Sandwip in the Bay of Bengal, in A.D. 1661. He along with his companions was pressed into the service of Mir Jumla. He related the events in detail in French in a
small volume, which remains undated. It was translated into English and printed at Amsterdam in A.D. 1681. Both the works are in the custody of the Archbishop Geothals’ Library. The English translation was reproduced in 1852 in *Tales of Ship Wrecks and Adventures at Sea*.

**British Accounts**

The British administrators in India paid special attention to the study of the people, ethnic groups, tribes, communities and their socio-economic and political organisation, especially in the case of north-east India. The vast corpus of books written by them is illustrative of this fact. The accounts, notes, descriptions, memoirs and diaries of the British officials, travellers and missionaries are of tremendous importance in understanding the region. The indigenous sources reviewed above have failed to shed light on this aspect. Their information was based on personal visit to the area. Their notes on specific points, diary jottings, and acquaintance with the people were all the result of their personal curiosity that spurred them to study the people. They travelled in the hilly regions extensively and reached even the remotest areas. Thus, their accounts are of immense importance and serve as first hand information for understanding the socio-economic and political conditions of the people. We are highly indebted to the British administrators for their inquisitiveness. It will not be an exaggeration to state that the systemic study and exploration of original source materials pertaining to the history and culture of the region commenced only after the expansion of the British rule in this part of India.

The first such British who did an extensive survey at an individual level was Dr. J. P. Wade, an Assistant Surgeon under the East India Company, deputed to Assam for official work in the late 17th century. He published his survey report as a voluminous
work called the *History of Assam* (1800). The work gives a detailed history of Kamarupa from the earliest times down to his own and presents a comprehensive account of the Ahom-Mughal conflicts.

A. J. Moffat Mills, a judge of the *Sudder* Court, deputed to Assam during the early days of British administration, prepared a sort of a report which talks of such diverse aspects as land, revenue, modes of cultivation, population patterns, manufactures, education, judicial system, etc. It was published as *Report on the Province of Assam* (1854).

The most important source with regard to our area of research is Montgomery Martin's *The History, Antiquities, Topography and Statistics of Eastern India*, published in 1838 in six volumes. Its Volume V deals with Kamrup. This work has received scant attention till present times. The work is based on Dr. Francis Buchanan's (Francis later dropped the name Buchanan and assumed Hamilton) survey report. The work commenced under the instruction of the Governor-General in Council in 1807. It was a survey of the provinces, subject to the presidency of Bengal. Buchanan was directed to collect information regarding the general topography of each district, the natural products of the country, the state of agriculture, etc. The survey was pursued during seven years, and in 1816, the results were transmitted home. Later Martin was permitted to see the manuscript in order to select relevant sections for publication. Volume V provides a valuable and elaborate picture of the Assamese Muslims of the 18th – 19th century in the Kamrup division. Details of their assimilation with the Ahom culture, the states of Muslim educational institutions, and life of *fakirs* are also presented here. The manuscripts of the survey report of F. Buchanan were re-edited and published by S. K. Bhuyan under the title, "An Account of Assam," in 1940.
E. A. Gait is rightly described as the pioneer of historical research on Assam. His monograph “The Koch Kings of Kamarupa” (JASB, vol. LXII, 1893) could be regarded as the first attempt to systematically and authoritatively study the origin of the Koch kingdom and its offshoot – the kingdom of Koch Behar and Koch Hajo – with reference to their relation with the Mughals. The work is based on an old manuscript history, Vamsavali, supposed to have been written by Surya Har Ganaka, about 1806, under the orders of Raja Samudra Narayan. His other work, A History of Assam, published in 1906, is deemed to be the first real historical work on Assam, on lines of modern research. The work for the first time used the accounts provided by the Buranjis and the Persian chronicles, to present a systematic and comprehensive history of Assam. It gives a detailed and authoritative account of the Muslim campaigns against the eastern frontier from the time of Muhammad Bhaktiyar Khalji down to the Mughal period. Despite his efforts Gait’s work suffers from some drawbacks, viz., he fails to utilize the Persian authorities in original; hasn't used the indigenous accounts to the fullest; and fails to see the Mughal’s frontier policy.

Col. Mc Culloch’s work Account of the Valley of Munnipore, published in 1859, is also a pioneering work on the ethnography, economy and culture of Manipur. It appears to be highly accurate, as these are based on his personal observations. He served as Assistant Political Agent in 1840 and later as Political Agent from 1845 to 1867, with a year’s intermission. In this long period of 27 years he acquired a most intimate knowledge of the state and its inhabitants, which is reflected in the work.

T. C. Hodson, who served as Assistant Political Agent and superintendent of the princely state of Manipur, has also left many works to his credit. Of special interest to our purpose, is his monumental work called The Meitheis, published in 1908. It is a
classic monograph on the meities. Like his predecessors he too based his work on personal observations. He was an anthropologist of note and served as professor in the East London College and Cambridge after his retirement. His other significant work is The Naga Tribes of Manipur, published in 1911.

In both these works and others, the socio-economic life of the Manipuri Muslims is highlighted, albeit poorly. But this is understandable for two reasons: the size of the population and the fact that much of their socio-economic and cultural traits, except their belief system were akin to the meities. Thus they got generalized. But the author does not fail to mention the peculiarities. The works remain the only source to construct the socio-economic and cultural life of the Muslims in the period under review.

The vast corpus of geographical dictionaries in the form of Gazetteers and the series of Statistical Accounts left behind by the Britishers also provide excellent material on the geography, history, culture and economy of the different regions of area under review. Mention must be made of – B. C. Allen’s Assam District Gazetteers series (1905); W. W. Hunter’s Statistical Account of Bengal series (Volumes I & II); W. W. Hunter’s Statistical Account of Assam series (Volumes VI & VII); B. C. Allen et. al., Gazetteer of Bengal and North-East India; E. W. Dun’s Gazetteer of Manipur (1904); Imperial Gazetteer of India series (Volumes XVII & XXIII).

Last but not the least, the architectural remains left by the Muslims in the form of mosques, and the dargahs of Muslims preachers also serve as an important source. Among the important one’s are the Poa-Mecca mosque and the dargah of Ghiyasuddin on the Gaurachol hill; the dargah, mosques, and other buildings associated with Shah Jalal, in Sylhet; and the mosque at Comilla, etc.