Abbreviations

AC Assam Commissioner Papers in Assam State Archive, Dispur
ACOER Assam Congress Opium Enquiry Report, 1925
ASA Assam State Archive, Dispur
BG Bengal Government Papers in Assam State Archive, Dispur
DHAS Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Government of Assam, Guwahati
GL Guildhall Library, London
MSA Meghalaya State Archive, Shillong
NAI National Archives of India, New Delhi
OIOC Oriental and India Office Collection, British Library, London
RCOGC Report of the Committee Appointed to enquire into Certain Aspects of Opium and Garja Consumption, 1913
RCSPTC Report of the Commissioners appointed to enquire into the State and Prospects of Tea Cultivation in Assam, Cachar, and Sylhet, 1868
RRCO Report of the Royal Commission on Opium, 1894
WBSA West Bengal State Archive, Kolkata

Language Conventions

Attractively different spellings of names of places, persons, communities and designations animate the nineteenth and early twentieth English sources. For example, the familiar eighteenth-century spellings were “Asem” or “Acham,” “Asam” and “Asamese” (frequently, “Asamer” or “Assamer”) were common in the early nineteenth-century documents, and there has been a trend since the late twentieth century to use “Asom” and “Axom.” However we have used the most familiar forms “Assam” and “Assamese” in our prose. Of course the spellings are kept intact when they occur within quoted texts. While the more familiar “Sadiya” is used throughout the dissertation, the archival excerpts might show a range of other spellings such as Sodiya, Suddeah, Suddeea, Suddeah, Suddeeya, Suddeya, Suddya, or Suddyah. Most of these spellings are easily decipherable (Ava for Aawa; Bhutia for Bootea, Booteah; Brahmaputra for Bhramapootra, Brahmpootur, Burhampooter, Burhampootra, Burhampootur, Burrampooter; Daflas for Duphlas; hat for hat, haut, haut; Jaintia for Jynteah, Jynteeah, Jyntiah; Jorehat for Jorhat, Jorehaut, Joorhath; Khamtis for Khamptees, Khamptis; Lakhipur for Luckimpore, Luckhimpore, and Luckimpoor; Manipur for Munnipore; Miris for Merees, Meerees; Mishmis for Meeshmees; Moamaria for
Moahmariah, Moamurrya, Mowamaria; Singphos for Jingpaws, Sing Phos, Singfos, Singphoes, Singphoos and Sinphos; and so on. Some require a little more attention: Bor Senapati for Bor Sainee Puttee, Bur Bur Senaputtee, Bur Senaputtee; Burra Sunaputtee, Burusa Puttee; Kacharis for Cacharees, Cacharies, Kacharees; Khasis for Kasseeahs, Casheeahs, Cosheeahs, Cossyahs and Khysees; Matak for Mattack, Muttek, Muttock; Sibsagar for Seebpoor, Seebpore and Sibpur, along with Sebsagur and Sebsaugor. We have used Darrang (instead of Durrung), Goalpara (substituting Goalparah, Gowalpara, or Gowlparra), Nagao (in place of Nowgong), and Guwahati (rather than Gauhati, Gowahatty, or Gwahatt)-1.

There might be another discrepancy. In many places we had to transliterate the proper names from non-English languages and did not have the option to crosscheck with the contemporary English renditions. In these cases we have followed today’s common spellings. For example, we have used the spelling ‘Barua’, while the word could have been written as Barooa, Baruah, Borooah, Burrooa or Burrooah in nineteenth-century English orthography. In other cases, we have tried to preserve the form in which the person used to sign in English (e.g., Goonabhiram Barooa).

The issue concerning the community appellations demands a full-length study in its own right. Choosing to understand a number of Tungkhungia categories as names for “ethnic” groups the early nineteenth-century British officers unwaveringly used terms like Abor, Naga, Mishmi etc to signify comprehensive communities. It took several years for the British officials to realize that the blanket categories were often unrecognized by the people on whom the terms were so indiscriminately showered. Increasing (particularly punitive and proprietorial) requirement of specification led to the use of settlement-specific (e.g., “Membo Abors”) or region-specific (e.g., “Sibsagar Nagas”) terms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But the displacement of the early nineteenth-century understanding was necessarily incomplete and indeed remains so till today. The spectacular mobility of the anthropological grids in the north-eastern frontier of British India still awaits its historians. The issue is further complicated by the fact that many of these communities creatively appropriated these names for various reasons and not infrequently decomposed and recombined unities. Therefore, it is not always easy to insist on the continuous history of a community (for example, the late nineteenth-century officials often alleged that in the early nineteenth-century usage, “Daflas” and “Abors” were “mixed up”). Again, since the late twentieth century, some historians have preferred to use the names “by which the communities call themselves”: Abors as Adis, Akas as Hrussos, Anka Miris as Apatanis, Bhutias as Duk-pas, Eastern or Tagin Daflas as Nishings, Western Daflas as Bangnis, Garos as Mandés, Jaintias as Syntengs, Kacharis as Boros, Lalungs as Tiwas, Lushais and Kukis as Dzos (or Zhos), Matak as Morans, Mikirs as Karbis, Miris as Mishing, and so on and so forth. While we appreciate the decolonizing gesture of this maneuver, at the same time we have reasons to fear that in projecting these names back into the context of the nineteenth century it violently nationalizes non-national histories and leads us away from the fissures and cracks in the ethnic discourse. Therefore this dissertation elects to stay with the terms as and when they emerge in the imperial archive, while remaining necessarily sensitive to the historically contingent nature of these constructs.

The Glossary does not include the terms which have been discussed at length in the chapters (e.g., duar, git, khel, paik, poora, posa, or ryo).

Translations from Assamese, Bengali, Hindi and Sanskrit, if not otherwise stated, are mine. I am grateful to Arun Kar and Sharmila Sarkar for helping me with several French excerpts.