Preface

Four years back, when I started this work, I was rather sceptical about the possible outcome. Firstly, because it might just be a mere repetition of what the earlier scholars had already done on Ahom studies. Secondly, because the studies on state formation cannot be worthwhile within the discipline of history alone. Thirdly, because of my own poor knowledge of the Ahom language.

But the scepticisms gradually disappeared when I had gone through E. H. Carr’s *What is History?*, and R. W. Fogel & G. R. Elton’s *Which Road to Past? Two Views of History*. Besides, the works of the anthropologists and sociologists like R. Naroll & Ronald Cohen, Elman R. Service, R. H. MacIver and Barrington Moore Jr. etc., have led me to the realisation that the entire approach shall have to be a multi-disciplinary one for which I had to land myself into the other social science disciplines, knowing fully well about the confused relationship of history with them, and sometimes almost weighed down by such sarcastic expressions like the one of a "Sociology is history with the hard work left out. History is sociology with the brains left out,"¹ which perhaps is, not without some truth.

But "the historical approach teaches us to try to
'see the grass growing beneath the ground' or to find in
a typical practices and beliefs the seeds of possible
future developments". This led me to search for a model,
and the works of F. Engels, E. R. Leach and H. J. M. Claessen
and Peter Skalnik, opened the way in burying the scepti-
cisms and in bringing home the point that 'the complex-
ity and vastness of the material appear as the biggest problem
in historical and human research'. Thus the methodologi-
cal approach here has to be different, at least not being
within the traditional historical method.

I gratefully acknowledge the generous services render-
ed to me by Shri Dambaru Deodhai Phukan and Shri Mukunda
Deodhai Phukan, including several others, not only for giving
me the access to the rare Ahom sanchipatia puthis, but also
for helping me in some of the transliterations. Inspite of
the ravages of time and tide, such puthis are still preser-
ved in several of the hearths and homes, being considered
as the proudest of possessions. To explore all these would
be a stupendous task, and would take several years. Only a

\[2^2\] Barrington Moore Jr., Political Power and Social Theory,

\[3^3\] Elias H. Tuma, Economic History and Social Sciences,
University of California Press, Berkeley & Los Angeles,
1971, p. 143.
well trained team of dedicated researchers would be able
to do the collecting, compiling, evaluating and the editing
works. Besides, the biggest problem would be to learn the
Ahom language which is fastly dying out, and even then,
the available expertise might not be of sufficient help
to serious researchers. As such, I have the feeling that
much remains to be done in the field of Ahom studies,
particularly in the dynamics of the Ahom systems.

I also record the kindness shown to me by Dr. J. N.
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But for whose valued guidance in my academic exercises,
the work would not have seen the light of the day.

Dated, Shillong,