

P R E F A C E

The North-Eastern region of India, as it is designated to-day, came into contact with the Mughals ever since the latter rose to power in Bengal during the reign of Akbar. Attempts were made by the successive Mughal emperors, Jahangir (1605-27) and Shah Jahan (1627-58) to extend the imperial hold over the monarchies bordering Bengal. The accession of Aurangzeb (1658-1707) to the Mughal throne experienced a desperate forward policy in the North-East during the early years of his stewardship. The more formidable challenges of the Marathas, Rajputs, Sikhs and the Jats in the later years, however, forced the Emperor not to indulge in any expansionist endeavours beyond Bengal. To make matters worse, disloyalty and plots and rebellions were noticed on the part of imperial officers, local chieftains and zamindars and the European Factors in Bengal. The monarchies in North East also passed through internal strifes and dissensions. A new spirit was inspired by Rudra Singh (1696-1714), the Ahom monarch who succeeded in bringing the chieftaincies and monarchies in the North East together to invade the Mughal province of Bengal. Although the death of Rudra Singh marked the end of the challenge of the North East and the Mughals too, thereafter, made no attempt to renew their aggressive frontier policy due mainly to the decaying condition of the empire, the earlier expeditions and the continued commercial contacts with Bengal had generated lasting political and social and economic impact for the North East.

In spite of the historical significance of the problem, no serious attempt has so far been made at an integrated study of the Mughal relations with North East India and its impact on the region. Sir Edward Gait in his 'A History of Assam' (London, 1905) briefly discussed the history of Mughal relations with Assam. S.N. Bhattacharya's 'A History of Mughal North-East Frontier Policy' (Calcutta, 1929), confined itself to such relations with Cooch Behar and Assam. The works of Sir J.N. Sarkar 'The History of Bengal' (Patna 1973) Jagadish Narayan Sarkar's 'The Life of Mir Jumla' (Calcutta, 1951) etc. also cover mainly this western division of the region. Besides, these and other works, including the articles that have appeared in various journals are mainly concerned with political relations alone. No attempt has virtually been so far made to

project the nature of Mughal contacts with the monarchies in the eastern division of the North East viz., Jayantia, Cachar and Tripura and the chieftaincies in the foot-hills of the Garos and the Khasis which were located directly on the borders of Bengal. The Mughal impact in the territories beyond the borders were also beyond the comprehension of the historians so far.

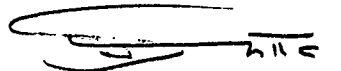
The object of the present research is to provide a comprehensive and critical analysis of the Mughal relations with North East India in a common perspective for the whole region from 1661 to 1714, i.e. Mir Jumla's campaign to the death of Rudra Singh. Attempts have been made to throw new lights particularly on the relations with the eastern division of the region and the Mughal impact on the North-East as a whole. The Mughal relations with Assam and Cooch Behar, that were covered by the learned historians earlier, have been re-discussed in the context of their north-east frontier policy covering the region from Cooch Behar to Arakan. The North-East India, as it stands to-day, has been visualised as a geographical-historical unit for the purpose of treatment.

Chapter I opens with the geographical, ethnological and historical background of the North East and covers briefly the history of Mughal relations with the region before the accession of Aurangzeb. The character of the frontier policy of Aurangzeb, his attitude towards the North-East and campaign of Mir Jumla, along with its objectives and consequences, have been discussed in Chapter II and Chapter III. The next Chapter deals with the campaign under Ram Singh, the Mughal defeat in the historic battle of Saraighat and its aftermath, and the causes and consequences of the debacle suffered by the Mughals. The years of inaction on either side in the years following the battle of Saraighat, the facts behind such inaction and the minimal contact maintained by the Mughals with Cooch Behar, Bijni, Darrang, Sherpur, Susang, Laur, Jayantia, Cachar and Tripura are dealt with in Chapter V. Chapter VI deals with the problems faced by Aurangzeb during his encounters with the militant races in North-West India and their repercussions in the eastern province of Bengal, and how the successive Ahom monarchs - Gadadhar Singh and Rudra Singh planned a confederacy of the North East to lead a campaign against the Mughals, its modus operandi and the nature of response of the rulers and chieftains

in the region to this scheme that failed to effect its objectives due to sudden death of Rudra Singh. The political, economic and social impact of the Mughal contacts has been discussed in the Chapter VII. Finally, Chapter VIII sums up the problem in retrospect and prospect.

The work is based mainly on local chronicles - Ahom, Assamese, Bengali and Manipuri - that are available both in print as well as in manuscripts with the record offices and research departments. The inscriptions, coinage and other records pertaining to the period under review have been taken cognizance of and utilised. The Mughal chronicles have been used from their published English versions. Portions of 'Fathiya-i-Ibriya', a persian chronicle by Shihabuddin Talish who accompanied Mir Jumla in his Assam campaign, were translated for the author by Maulavi Md Khalique of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta. The records of the Dutch Factors have also been used from their published English translation. A large number of contemporary and semi-contemporary as well as secondary works have also been consulted and utilised the details of which are appended in the Bibliography towards the end of the volume.

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