In this study an attempt has been made to analyse the political life of the people of Assam during the nineteenth century. The period was replete with events and changes. During the period under review, Assam was subjected to repeated changes beginning with the Burmese, then through the English East India Company and finally with the establishment of direct British Raj. These changes were uneven in respect of the plain and hill people. Our study aims at studying the political evolution of the Province during the course of the nineteenth century.

The first quarter of the nineteenth century witnessed protracted inter-house feuds among the Ahom nobles offering, as they did, opportunities to the Burmese to invade Assam and begin their reign of terror. The unsettled conditions of the land paved the way to the British take-over of Assam eventually. The British came with a promise of rescuing Assam from the Burmese oppression but they turned out to be its masters, holding it as a prize of conquest. During the early period of the East India Company's rule, resistance movements sprang up in Assam for driving out the British and restoring the rule of the dispossessed Ahom monarchy. In the middle of the century there broke out in the country the 'Sepoy Mutiny', regarded as the First War of Independence, and this had its echoes in Assam as well. The failure of the Rebellion marked the end of the Company Raj and the establishment of the sovereignty of the British Crown. This led to important changes in the administration. Popular movements in the new period chose economic issues for expression of grievances of the people. The organisational forms of the popular movements were mainly the 'Réi-Mela', 'Sarhajanik Sabhas', 'Ryot Sabhas', and 'Assam
Association. The popular movements were either smothered or suppressed by the alien rulers. After suffering humiliations for about half a century or more, there developed the realisation, however hesitant, to win freedom from alien authority. Assam was decidedly drawn into the mainstream of the national events.

In the present study an endeavour has been made to describe chronologically the activities of a few Ahom princes in the early period of the British supremacy, establishment of the British administration in the Province, popular reactions to it, and the impact of British administrative policies on the life and society in their varied aspects. An account of the origins, development and activities of various organs of popular and public opinion form important part of the present study.

Chapter 1 deals with the geo-political conditions that marked the beginning of the nineteenth century in Assam. It is considered to be a useful introduction for reasons of a study of this aspect. It also covers the historical background that led the Neemaria Uprisings and their impact on the Ahom monarchy.

Chapter 2 is devoted to an analysis of the politics of the Ahom Raj; the internecine feuds among the Ahom nobles and the resultant consequences in the wake of the coming of the Burmese.

Chapter 3 is devoted to a study of the British role in expelling the Burmese from Assam and their becoming the masters of the land under the Treaty of Yandabo which concluded the Anglo-Burmese war. The effects of the Treaty on Assam and the kingdoms of Cachar, Jayantia and Manipur have also been discussed.
Chapter 4 deals with the administration of the Company Raj and its policy of annexation. It shows how the Company Raj pursued its policy of annexation in Upper Assam, Cachar, Jayantia and the territories of the Matakas, Singphoes and the Khamptis.

Chapter 5 deals with the popular uprisings in the plains and the hills as forms of popular reactions to the Company’s policy of annexation and penetration.

Chapter 6 is a study on the impact of the Rebellion of 1857 on Assam and its consequences for the Province. Chapter 7 deals with the post-1857 popular movements in the Province over political and economic issues.

Chapter 8 deals with the process of the rise of organised nationalist movements in the Province. The rise of nationalism in the new period was the outcome of popular movements that gripped the Province in the preceding period as also the interaction of various forces like the impact of English education, western thoughts, and the administrative and economic policies of the alien rulers. Chapter 9 is in the nature of summing-up containing the result of our study.

While making the study, attempts have been made to go all the available materials relevant to our study. The bibliography shows the extent of the materials used, both published and unpublished.

(Bijay Bhushan Hazarika)