A large number of inscriptions of Assam extending from the 5th century A.D. till the coming of the British in the early part of the 19th century A.D. have so far been discovered. They were edited and published from time to time in certain books, local periodicals and magazines and in allied journals. P.N. Bhattacharyya's Kāmarūpa-dāsanāvalī is the first anthology of the copper plate inscriptions of the early kings of Assam. M.R. Sharma's Inscriptions of Ancient Assam and D. Sarma's Kāmarūpa-dāsanāvalī are the other two anthologies of the inscriptions of the ancient period of Assam history. M. Meeg's Prābhva-dāsanāvalī is a collection of almost all the Sanskrit and Assamese inscriptions of medieval Assam.

From the early period to the 12th century A.D. the language of the inscriptions of Assam was Sanskrit. But in the later period the inscriptions were issued in Sanskrit, Assamese and Tāi Āhom languages. There are a few inscriptions in Persian as well. The present study is concerned with the literary aspect of only the Sanskrit inscriptions and the Sanskrit passages of the other inscriptions having more than one language.

The inscriptions were left by different ruling authorities of Assam of different ages. So, a brief historical account of the royal dynasties of Assam is deemed desirable in the
Along with the brief history of the royal houses, it is also felt important to show the geographical location of present day Assam and the changes of its political boundary from time to time. The occurrence of the name of the land in the Epics, Purāṇas, Tantras, epigraphs and Kāvyas is referred to in the first chapter. The views of some modern scholars about the origin of different names of the land in different times is also discussed in brief. In chapter II we have made a survey of the whole corpus of the inscriptions. The list includes all the available Sanskrit inscriptions of Assam published up to the time. In chapter III the scope of the study of the inscriptions is discussed. The chapter ends with a descriptive note of the elements which reflect the literary beauty. After these preliminary discussions, we have come to the main field of our investigation, i.e., to evaluate the literary merits of the inscriptions. For our purpose, we have prepared two chapters; chapter IV is devoted to the inscriptions of ancient Assam while chapter V to those of medieval Assam.

The subject of the present study was suggested to me by my teacher and the supervisor of the present work Professor M.R. Sharma. While the work was in progress and I had completed the first three chapters, my guide Professor Sharma took an assignment as a Professor of Sanskrit and Indian Cultural History at the Udayana University of Indonesia, for a period of two years, in the month of August, 1983. Consequently I had
to execute the work of the last two chapters of the thesis during the period of the absence of my guide from Gauhati University. After writing the whole thesis I had to send it to my guide in Indonesia for final correction.

It will be seen in course of the present study that the inscriptions of Assam have some similarities with the inscriptions of other parts of India. It is very interesting to see that the inscriptions of ancient Assam have some characteristics in common with the Sanskrit inscriptions of Kambuja (modern Kampuchea) else. I have discussed the similarities in my paper, 'Some Observations on the Inscriptions of Kambuja' published in the Journal of the Assam Research Society, Vol. XXVII, 1983. Further, the inscriptions of medieval Assam have some similarities with the Balinese inscriptions.

No systematic literary study of the inscriptions of Assam has been made before the present work. It has been stated earlier that here we have made a literary study of the Sanskrit inscriptions of Assam. Some of the other aspects also of these inscriptions can be found in course of our detailed discussion. The Sanskrit inscriptions stand testimony to the standard of Sanskrit studies in Assam in different periods of Assam history. Some of the Sanskrit passages of the medieval inscriptions supply evidence for studying the catholicity of outlook of the kings in respect of religion. The Sanskrit and the Assamese passages of the medieval inscriptions can help us in making a
serious study of the origin and development of the Assamese script. Some of the inscriptions of medieval Assam are also found helpful for studying the origin of the present day word 'Assam'. I have endeavoured to throw some light on the subject in my paper, 'The Significance of the Word Assam in the Inscriptions of Medieval Assam' read in the Tenth Annual Congress of the Epigraphical Society of India, Aurangabad, March 1984. The operative parts of the land grant copper plate charters of medieval Assam give us some hints for studying the socio-economic conditions of the people of Assam. The Ahom and the Persian inscriptions also should be found useful for studying the various aspects of the history of Assam.

Regarding the methodology of the present dissertation it requires to be stated here that although it is a general convention to underline all the Sanskrit words and passages occurring in a work written in English yet such words and passages are not underlined here because of the exigency of their being quoted so frequently and so copiously. If at all any Sanskrit word is underlined, it is done so only for the sake of emphasis.

It is required to be very humbly stated here that while pointing out the Alamkāras like Anuṣṭava, Upanaśa and Rūpaka,

*To show the development of the Assamese script through various stages, a few plates representing some pages of the epigraphs of the period of our study are appended to the present work.*
the practice generally followed here is to point out the Alaṅkāras in a general way without going into the sub-varieties of the Alaṅkāras concerned except for some very important sub-varieties like Purnopamā and Paramparīta Rūpaka.

With these prefatory words I present this dissertation for the adjudication of the learned authorities with the following oft-quoted lines of Kālidāsa:

\[ \text{tei santah śrotum arhanti} \]
\[ \text{sadasadvyaktihstavah/} \]
\[ \text{hemnāḥ saśālayataḥ hyagnau} \]
\[ \text{visūddhiḥ śāṃśikāpi vā/} \]

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