THE FINALE

This thesis, divided into six chapters, is concerned with the composition of histories of various localities within Bengal, between 1850 and 1950, in Bengali. Here, we have given special emphasis on western Bengal and the district of Barddhaman. In this dissertation we have highlighted several essential issues crucial for the development of this genre of history-writing, and traced its growth in both Eastern and Western Bengal. The progress of the nano-historical genre in Bengali must be placed within the broader social and historiographical context. History writing in Bengali, in the modern sense, started in the early nineteenth century after the establishment of the Fort William College. However, in the early decades of the nineteenth century Bengali History books were largely school texts or virtual translations of English works. But after the Revolt of 1857 and the Indigo Rebellion, we notice some effort, from the 1860s, on the part of the Bengali historians to compose tracts which were more original and comparatively free of Western influence.\textsuperscript{755} A noted venture which reflected this refreshing spirit was Rajkrishna Mukherjee’s \textit{Pratham Sikhsha Bangalar Itihas} (1874). Soon, the number of historical essays published in Bengali periodicals and journals increased noticeably. A special interest among the literati in local history and antiquities became visible from this time. By the end of the nineteenth century, Bengali books regarding local history were being published regularly. Around this time a number of luminaries appeared in the Bengali historical firmament such as Rajanikanta Gupta, Haraprasad Shastri, Akshaykumar Maitrey, Ramaprasad Chanda and Rakhalbadas Banerjee. They were interested in the history of Bengal as a whole and in the annals of specific localities as well. Their professional expertise certainly boosted the growth of local history-writing.

The period between 1870 and 1905 is very important in the history of Bengal. This was the time when Bengali bhadraloks started getting disillusioned with the British rule. Till the 1840s, many of them had welcomed the British hegemony as a necessary catalyst for much needed social improvement e.g. Rammohan Ray, Dwarkanath Tagore and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. But by 1870s the exploitative character of the colonial rule

\textsuperscript{755} Kamal Chaudhuri, ed. \textit{Banglar Itihas} (Dey’s Publishing, Koklkata, 2006), vol-1, Preface
was becoming apparent to them. The British rulers effectively excluded the Bengali educated groups from higher administration, military and large-scale trade and commerce. The bhadraloks became virtually dependent on petty clerical jobs and small-scale landed property. This created a sense of discontent and frustration amongst them. But at that stage there was no hope of immediate redemption for the bhadraloks. After the Mutiny of 1857, in which they did not participate, the middle-class Bengalis could not even dream of overthrowing the British.

So at that stage, for mental sustenance, and to create a contrast to the pessimistic daily existence, the Bengali bhadraloks started looking back towards their glorious heritage. Brian Hatcher had noted how from the 1880s the bhadraloks started celebrating their social reforms of 1830s and ’40s and the idea of a ‘Bengali Renaissance’ took shape amongst them. At this time evidences of Hindu revivalism can be traced among them.756 One noticeable phenomenon amongst the bhadraloks was their emotional celebration of the countryside. Bhadraloks residing in Kolkata and in the provincial towns such as Dhaka, Hughly, Barddhaman and Murshidabad started advertising the natural beauty of villages and small towns and the indigenous cultural traditions found there. This certainly gave a great filip to the production of local histories, and we see from the 1870s, a large number of such books getting published. Though not formal histories, efforts of similar nature were Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar’s Thakurmar Jhuli (1907), Jogendranath Gupta’s Banglar Dakat (Dacoits of Bengal) and Khagendranath Mitra’s Garh-Jangaler Kahini (Tale of the Jungle Fort). These works were meant to inculcate love of the country-side amongst the children and the young-folk.757 Actually, even in the late nineteenth century, many of the bhadralok residents of Kolkata maintained regular link with ancestral villages. Some of them like Kalikamal Sarbabhauma and Shyamdhan Mukherjee after being educated in Kolkata were posted in districts. This again strengthened their bounds with country-life. Sumit Sarkar has shown, that contrary to popular perception, the Bengali bhadralok did not entertain a particularly positive

757 For a study of the bhadraloks’ attempt to construct a romantic imaginary countryside through juvenile literature, see Satadru Sen ‘A Juvenile Periphery: The Geographies of Literary Childhood in Colonial Bengal’ (Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History, John Hopkins University 2009).
impression about Kolkata city. Many middle and lower middle-class Bengalis, originally hailing from the countryside, had to reside in the metropolis for professional reasons. They did not view Kolkata life in a rather bright light. For them, Kolkata was the embodiment of all evils of the modern age. It was a city dominated by the British and some non-Bengali businessmen and the Bengalis had to suffer from various social and racial discriminations there. It was a place where the middle-class professionals were forced to follow a monotonous heartless routine, regulated by Western ‘Clock-time’, in search of a meagre salary. Quite naturally, despite living in the city, they retained a soft-corner in their hearts for the countryside. For them, Kolkata was their *basa* (temporary residence) while the countryside was their *desh* (original abode). In fact, the antipathy towards Kolkata was so strong that, when in 1911 the Imperial Capital was shifted to Delhi, the bhadraloks virtually made no protest.

This emotional attachment to rural Bengal had important bearing on the composition of local history. Most of the *nano*-historians adopted the Westernized framework which divided Indian history into Hindu/Muslim/British periods and accepted European scientific methods of analyzing history. But only scientifically verified archaeological and numismatic evidences did not form the backbone of their work. Myths, legends, folklores and hearsay current in rural society found ample space in the local histories. This was a result of the deep bhadralok attachment to the traditional country and small-town social structure. During the 1870s & ’80s a series of incidents took place that turned the bhadralok attention towards the countryside such as the Pabna riots of 1873 and the tenancy legislation of 1885. In many of the local histories gushing praise for the natural scenery of the villages is found. Only a few historians like Jogendranath Gupta and Satishchandra Mitra could maintain a judicious balance between emotion and rationality. Even then, a lot of traditional historical materials found their way into their works. Thus an ‘antiquarian’ spirit was present in the local histories. Their

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758 Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History*, (OUP, New Delhi, 1997), p.186

authors were often not writing dispassionate ‘scientific’ histories, but celebrating their ancestral heritage.

The drafting of local histories was part of a larger project of the ‘bhadralok’ to discover the history of various Bengali castes (Jati), religio-cultural groups (sampraday) and society (samaj). In the period under consideration a large number of religio-cultural and social histories were produced. We may immediately recall works like, Akshaykumar Dutta’s *Bharat Varshiya Upasak Sampradaya* (1911) and Durgachandra Sanyal’s *Banglar Samajik Itihas* (1910). All these efforts were directed towards the goal of constructing the history of Bengal in an indigenous fashion. This *Bengalized* history would act as a counter to the colonial master’s account of the province, which many of the bhadraloks found unacceptable. Realizing the impossibility of political action against the British, these bhadroloks took recourse to culture to arouse patriotism among the common Bengalis. Nabagopal Mitra was one such patriot, who founded ‘National Theatre’, ‘National Paper’, ‘National School’ and ‘National Fair’. For initiating so many nationalist enterprises people called him ‘National’ Nabagopal! Dramatists like Dinabandhu Mitra and Girish Chandra Ghosh, too, fanned anti-British and pro-Bengali feelings through their plays.

Anti-British mentality was not confined to the bhadraloks of Calcutta, but they were spreading to the countryside as well by the 1870s. If we scan the local newspapers, published outside Calcutta, such as *Hindu Hitoishini* and *Gharib* of Dhaka, *Murshidabad* of Murshidabad, and *Bharat Mihir* of Mymensingh, we would find a large number of articles published there regarding the British misrule. The subjects covered there included criticism of British economic policies, anti-Indian rules in the Civil Service exams, the Vernacular Press Act, the Arms Act and the Ilbert Bill controversy.\(^{760}\) This spread of socio-political consciousness in the countryside is very significant. A recent study has revealed that the number of periodicals and newspapers published from Eastern Bengal grew steadily between 1860 and '90. Between 1860 and '70 these were published mainly from Dhaka. But after 1870, more and more publications came out of small towns such as Mymensingh, Chattagram, Rangpur and Rajshahi. This indicated that in these sub-

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regional centres a professional middle class was coming up which was adequately literate and was interested in socio-political and cultural issues.\footnote{Muntasir Mamun, \textit{Unish Satake Purba Banglar Sambad Samayik Patra}, (Dey’s Publishing, Kolkata, 1997), Chapter 7 & 8.} In the political field they were helpless against the British, but they were willing to cultivate the culture and history of the land and thereby increase the confidence of their countrymen.

This is shown by publication of periodicals such as \textit{Aryaprabha} of Mymensingh (1880) which was concerned with the cultural heritage of ancient India, and \textit{Arya Pradip} of the same place (1878), which professed to publish good articles on literature, history and science. \textit{Biswabandhu} of Bagura (1879) even thought of spreading love of knowledge amongst the lower classes of society while \textit{Abalabandhab} of Vikrampur (1869) was out to promote female education and liberty.\footnote{Muntasir Mamun, op.cit., chapter 8.} The presence of such social consciousness in comparatively backward Eastern Bengal was truly noteworthy. Most of the editors of these papers and periodicals like Harinath Majumdar were not financially solvent. But they remained devoted to their causes. Thus we see that by the 1870s, in Bengal countryside a considerable number of people were prepared to write and read local history. The emotional attachment to the rural areas explains the note of local jingoism present in many books of local history.

The culmination of all these efforts to recover the natural heritage of Bengal was Dineshchandra Sen’s \textit{Brihat Banga} published in 1935. This was an account of Bengal based on traditional indigenous sources and it has distinctly antiquarian free-style flair. It is not a work in the R.D.Banerjee or R.C.Majumdar mould, banking on archival and archaeological materials and satisfying Western historical canons. The Swadeshi movement (1903-11) acted as a great booster for bhadralok antiquarians and scholars engaged in writing local history. During this agitation, there was a burst of patriotic feeling throughout the province and people in general felt an interest in the indigenous heritage. So, quite a few local histories were composed within 1914, especially in East Bengal, a terrain which was most affected by the Partition of Bengal in 1905. During the so-called ‘Bengal Renaissance’ the Bengali literati, mostly based in Calcutta, conceptualized their homeland Bengal as a Hindu mother Goddess. These images were.
most powerfully expressed by Bankimchandra in his legendary composition, *Bande Mataram* (Hail Mother!). This concept spread to the districts and the countryside widely during the Swadeshi movement. The educated persons of the rural areas enthusiastically promoted the idea of the homeland being synonymous with the archetypal Mother. Satish Mitra in his *Jessore-Khulnar Itihas* repeatedly referred to ‘Mother Bengal’. It was soon accepted that the essence of Mother Bengal could be found only in the countryside and the villages. This sentiment was expressed by Tagore in his song *Amar Sonar Bangla* (1906) which celebrated rural Bengal. Satish Mitra emotionally described the pleasure of living in a pollution free prosperous village bordered by country rivers, in the simple pre-colonial days.

The patriotic optimism in Bengal persisted till the early 1920s. Tagore’s winning of the Nobel Prize in 1913, the enthusiastic participation of Muslims and women in the Non-cooperation Movement in Bengal under C.R. Das in 1921, the political adventures of Rashbehari Bose and Bagha Jatin, the activities of the Swaraj Party, fuelled the patriotic spirit in Bengal. Significantly, till the early 1920s many local histories continued to be published. We have noted earlier that in terms of quantity, the production of local histories started gaining momentum from 1875 and touched the peak between 1900 and 1925. But after 1925, the number and the quality of such books declined markedly. This was significantly a period when political atmosphere of Bengal deteriorated sharply owing to factional and communal squabbles, Bengal itself started becoming peripheral in national politics and the province was hit by a number of natural and political crises in the 1940s. This must have affected life in villages and small towns rather adversely. This might explain the declining interest in local histories. Thus we see that the main inspiration for the local historians was a sense of ‘Bengaliness’. The westernized frame work of institutional history did serve as a useful intellectual model, but the nano-historians were not unduly influenced by the European hegemonic claims. Rather some of them tried to give rejoinders to European scholars who painted Bengali history with unfavourable hue. The influence of indigenous Bengali culture over these historians

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psyche is shown by the fact that they tried to compose histories of Gauda, Varendra, Vikrampur and Suvarnagram. These were not real districts or sub-divisions to be located in the map of British Bengal, but imaginary or legendary units which have definite place in the Bengali tradition.

However, this historical venture had its own drawbacks. Most of the local histories were composed by well-educated bhadraloks. Quite naturally, these books reflected only the historical preferences of the bhadralok group. In works of authors like Jogendranath Gupta, the voices of Muslims and the lower castes were virtually absent. Even in 1948, Sudhirkumar Mitra could not overcome this bias. A few scholars like Dineshchandra Sen, who highlighted the contributions of the common folk, remained glorious exceptions. It must be remembered that the Swadeshi movement of 1903-11 never took off successfully outside the bhadralok group. Attempts to coerce poor Muslim peasant into joining the Swadeshi movement sparked off communal riots in East Bengal in 1906-07. From the 1860s, Hinduism in Bengal started staging a revival. The culture of logic and reason, promoted by Brahmaism, came under increasing attack from Hindu revivalists such as Sasadhar Tarkachuramani and Krishna Prasanna Sen. Many of the bhadraloks were also attracted towards Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who preached a simple, modified form of Bhakti philosophy. Another influential defender of Hinduism was Bankimchandra, who was not a blatant revivalist like Sasadhar Tarkachuramani or a simple ‘Bhakta’ like Ramakrishna. He was a great formal scholar who tried to reform Hinduism according to the demands of the new age. Inspired by the efforts of these individuals many bhadraloks felt proud of their Hindu heritage. Unfortunately, this confidence was soon translated into hatred of the Muslims, who were seen as intruders into India. The Bengali bhadraloks were aware of their privileged position vis-à-vis the Muslims in the colonial set up. So, they felt encouraged to proclaim their love of Hinduism and dislike of Islam in their literary ventures. The novels of Rameshchandra Dutta and plays of Dwijendralal Ray are examples of such mentality. Therefore, it is natural that many local historians writing in the last three decades of the nineteenth century were overtly pro-Hindu.

765 Sumit Sarkar ‘Writing Social History’, op.cit, p.25.
766 Swapan Basu, op.cit., pp. 340-51
There may be one more reason for some of the local historians becoming aggressively pro-Hindu. From the 1870s, the bhadralok dominance in Bengali society came under increasing threat from the Muslims. The 1872 census had for the first time revealed, rather surprisingly, that Bengal was a Muslim majority province. From the 1870s, the Government increased expenditure on Muslim education considerably. This yielded some results as, despite considerable social opposition, the number of Muslim youths successfully taking up western education continued to increase.\textsuperscript{767} Naturally, these educated Muslims challenged the hegemony of the Hindu bhadraloks in the restricted job market. The situation was especially complicated in Eastern Bengal. There, demographically, the Muslims were in clear majority, but most of the zamindars and educated professionals were Hindus. Here, too, the Hindu social dominance was challenged by the Muslims. The tenancy legislation of 1885 had protected the more well-off Muslim peasants against Hindu moneylenders and zamindars. Many of these affluent peasants took to jute cultivation and gained handsomely by the end of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{768} Thus, they gained greater leverage in rural society and shook the hold of Hindu bhadraloks. Many of the landed and educated Muslims did not welcome the revoking of the Partition of Bengal in 1911. They wanted Eastern Bengal to develop as a separate Muslim majority province. This defiant attitude certainly made many of the bhadraloks in Eastern Bengal apprehensive. This might explain the emotional celebration of the bhadralok tradition in most local histories of Eastern Bengal. It should also be mentioned that some authors like Kalinath Chaudhuri and Kedarnath Majumdar tried to address the question why the Muslims were in vast majority in Eastern Bengal, in their works.\textsuperscript{769} However, the progress among the Muslims in educational and social spheres had a positive fall out. Some of the educated Muslim youths enthusiastically cultivated the Bengali language. Between 1873 and 1900, 28 Bengali periodicals, edited by Muslims appeared.\textsuperscript{770} We must remember that alongside bhadraloks, some Muslims also wrote local histories, especially about Srihatta. Like their Hindu brethren, they, too, celebrated their own heroes like Shah Jalal.

\textsuperscript{767} Swapan Basu, op.cit., p. 385.
\textsuperscript{768} Sumit Sarkar, \textit{Modern India}, (Macmillan India, New Delhi, 1987), pp. 110-11.
\textsuperscript{769} Refer to chapter 5 of this thesis.
\textsuperscript{770} Swapan Basu, op.cit., p. 391.
From the late nineteenth century, alongside the Muslim revival, socio-political movement amongst the depressed castes such as the Yogis, Baniks and Namashudras became a major social phenomenon in Bengal. The lot of these social groups was generally not happy in nineteenth century Bengal. The Namashudras were the largest Hindu group in Eastern Bengal. But even in 1911 only 3.78% of the rent receiving zamindars were Namashudras. The rest were generally poor peasants oppressed by the high-caste zamindars.\textsuperscript{771} From 1872 we note increasing social consolidation amongst the Namashudras. They increasingly defied the socio-economic dominance of the high caste bhadraloks in the countryside. Soon, a new religious order came up amongst them known as the Matua which united them spiritually, and the ‘Bengal Namashudra Association’ was founded in 1912. It was clear to the Namashudra leaders that to gain social respectability the members of the community must have access to modern education, government jobs and political power. So, from the first decade of the twentieth century the Namashudra leaders agitated for gaining access to these institutions. From the 1919 constitutional reforms the British Government started giving them some privileges. Similar examples of aggressive social consciousness could be found among other depressed castes as well. In Western Bengal, after the 1901 census, depressed castes such as Yogis and Baniks showed increasing tendency to consolidate themselves and demand greater social rights. They formed caste associations and published books and journals regarding caste identity. During the 1921 and ’31 censuses, the yogis claimed that they should be counted as Brahmins. As early as 1908 the Namashudras claimed that they should be recognized as descendents of Aryan Brahmin sages.\textsuperscript{772} In earlier chapters of the thesis we have already noted the issue of the caste consciousness among the Baniks. Thus, local history became a contested domain where various social groups such as the bhadraloks, educated Muslims and depressed caste members tried to find their space.

Interestingly, the members of the depressed castes did not generally identify themselves with the nationalist movement spearheaded by the higher caste leaders. The Namashudras, especially in Dhaka division, did not participate in the Swadeshi movement of 1905. Rather they desired the continuity of the British rule and lobbied for

\textsuperscript{771} Sekhar Bandyopadhyay (ed.) \textit{Jati, Barna O Bangali Samaj} (ICBS, New Delhi, 1998), pp. 128-29.
\textsuperscript{772} Ibid., pp. 116-117.
more privileges in the fields of education and government jobs. In 1916 the Namashudra periodical, *Pataka* (The Flag) clearly praised the British for freeing the depressed castes from the Brahmin yoke. It hailed the British as the greatest friend of the non-privileged section of the Indian society, and prayed for the continuance of the British rule.\(^{773}\) Naturally, the bhadraloks, especially in the countryside, viewed this assertion of the lower castes with apprehension. They felt their traditional social hegemony being threatened. So, in their literary ventures they tried to preserve the memory of a world which was dominated by the bhadraloks, a world which was rapidly changing from the late nineteenth century. Most of the Bengali local histories are full of such romantic nostalgic sentiment. However, many of the articles and the monographs written to promote particular non-Brahmin castes contain valuable information on history and culture of various localities. This has been shown in the earlier chapters.

The problems of common peasants and industrial workers were never properly addressed by the bhadralok leaders. Besides, most of these authors being persons of moderate means, had to depend on the patronage of loyalist Zamindars and Govt. officials. The ‘Varendra Anusandhan Samiti’ was backed by Saratkumar Ray, the Zamindar of Dighapatia, and the ‘Rarh Anusandhan Samiti’ was patronized by Bijaychand Mahatab, the Maharaja of Barddhaman and Romaprasad Mullick, Zamindar of Agrwadeep. The Rajas of Barddhaman and Dinajpur substantially helped Nagendranath Basu in compiling the history of northern Rarh and founding the ‘Burdwan Abhyarthana Samiti’. The Barddhaman Raja also started a periodical *Barddhaman Sanjivani* which contained articles on local history. The Dewan of the Murshidabad court supplied Kaliprasanna Banerjee with valuable documents necessary for his *Banglar Itihas Nawabi Amal* (1908).\(^{774}\) Quite naturally, the nano-historians remained very grateful to their aristocratic and official patrons. Naturally, many of them could not speak out against the oppressive socio-political order headed by the aristocrats. Rather they dedicated their books to the latter. This phenomenon of penning local history in Bengali should be placed in the broader context. During this time similar efforts to produce local

\(^{773}\) Ibid p.118

\(^{774}\) Swarupa Gupta, *Notions of Nationhood in Bengal*, (Brill, Boston 2009)
histories in indigenous languages were being made in other parts of India. The princely states of Rajasthan, especially Mewar, took special interest in recording their annals in Hindi or regional Rajasthani tongues. The publication of *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* by Col. James Tod (1832), created a tremendous impact on the psyche of Rajput rulers and scholars. So, in the mid and late nineteenth century we see a number of Rajasthani historians coming up, like Kaviraj Shyamal Das, Suryamal Mishra, Munshi Jvala Shahi, Munshi Devi Prasad, G.S. Ojha and Bisheshwar Riu. They wrote several important books such as *Vir-Vinod, Vamsa Bhaskar, Bakai Rajasthan, Marwar ki Itihas* and *Kota Rajki Itihas*. Amongst them, Shyamal Das’s *Vir Vinod* and G.S. Ojha’s *Rajputana ki Itihas* deserve special mention. In Bengal’s neighbour Assam also we come across similar attempts.

As in Bengal, printing arrived in Assam with the European missionaries in the early nineteenth century. Rev Nathan Brown played a crucial role in popularizing printed books in Assam. He opened a number of modern schools there. More importantly, he unearthed a number of old manuscripts about Assam history and wrote *Grammatical Notes on the Assamese Language* (1848), the first modern scientific study of the language. His efforts inspired the Assamese intellectuals to take keen interest in their own history, tradition and language. In 1846 the first printed magazine in Assam, *Orunodai* (The Dawn) came out. It published articles on Assam history regularly. It also brought out the *Buranjis* (Ahom dynastic chronicles) in properly edited form. From the 1860s, the Assamese started asserting themselves against the Bengali dominance in their province. For several reasons the British encouraged Bengali migration to Assam. Soon better educated Bengalis started dominating the socio-economic scene of Assam and looked down upon the Assamese. The Bengali speaking district of Sylhet was attached to Assam in 1874. This threatened to make the Assamese linguistic minority in their own province. So the Assamese, especially the students, felt an extreme need to restore and promote the history and culture of Assam. This was necessary to create a

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distinct Assamese identity. The Assamese students of Kolkata started publishing a magazine called Jonaki from the heartland of Bengali civilization to create awareness about Assamese history and culture. Surya Kumar Bhuyan (1894-1964) contributed greatly in popularizing Assam history among the Assamese themselves and outsiders. He lamented that the Indians generally were completely ignorant about Assam. As a remedy he composed a number of popular literary and historical works. Recently a historical novel, The Bronze Sword of Thengphakri (2009) by Indira Goswami has highlighted the role of the minor communities in Assam like the Bodos, who have been neglected by the majority Ahoms.

The unique feature of this nano-historiographical exercise in Bengali was that persons of all descriptions could participate in it. Not only professional historians but many teachers, lawyers, Zamindars and officials wrote noted local histories. In chapter 2 we have discussed the careers of many such amateurs, who were formally not highly qualified but owing to their dedication wrote valuable accounts of their tracts. They include persons such as Kedarnath Majumdar, Nikhilnath Ray and Sudhir Mitra. They made considerable personal sacrifices to achieve their aim of writing good local histories. Achyutacharan Chaudhuri’s wife and son died while he was composing his work on Srihatta. But he did not give up. Sudhir Mitra was given a cold shoulder by the official academicians and influential residents of Hughly. Satish Mitra was given a hostile reception by the rural folk, when he went for field survey, because they thought he was an inquisitive revenue official or a detective. Their relationship with the formal historians, who were making their mark from the early twentieth century, remained complex. Sir Jadunath Sarkar praised Achyutacharan for his diligence but was critical of his mixing of historical facts with myths and geography. However, he praised Satish Mitra for penning a balanced account of Jessore-Khulna. Hiteshranjan Sanyal strongly criticized Sudhir Mitra for failing to appreciate the finer points of serious history. But some formal scholars like Niharranjan Ray appreciated Mitra for meticulous fact collection. Actually, the development of the genre of local history was inspired by some romantic, patriotic motives which have been discussed in chapter 1. The local annalists often attempted, not to write merely factual histories of their terrains, but to collect all types of materials regarding the area’s heritage. So, the goals of the amateur local
historians often remained different from those of the formal academicians. Some local historians were influenced by the methods of mainstream history-writing. Satish Mitra and Rakhaladas Mukherjee wrote the accounts of their areas, following formal chronology. Still, within this branch of history academic hierarchy was less apparent. Owing to this broad-based participation, many rare details of a particular locality could be brought to light and its holistic picture could be sketched.

Nowadays, many localities in the interior of Bengal are losing their distinction owing to the effect of globalization, unscientific urbanization, and population pressure. So, it is extremely necessary for the local people of every social status to come forward and protect their sub-regional heritage. Fortunately, the study of nano-history is pursued enthusiastically by some contemporary scholars, both professional historians and amateurs. The former include Debabrata Ghosh, Subhaschandra Sen, Ranjan Kumar Gupta and Ranajit Dasgupta. They have done their researches according to strictly formal academic canons and contributed crucially towards constructing the social and economic history of Barddhaman, Hughly, Birbhum and Jalpaiguri. Some ground level research works were initiated by the Governments of West Bengal and India. In 1981 the Government of India published the ‘Survey Report of Uttarpara-Kotrung Municipality’. Among the non-formal scholars, Kamal Chaudhuri and Yajneshwar Chaudhuri deserve special mention. Kamal Chaudhuri has very efficiently edited and re-published many old forgotten local histories, while Yajneshwar Chaudhuri has written a number of books on Barddhaman, Nadia and other parts of Rarh. Others such as Shibendu Manna, Debaprasad Jana, Barun Ray and Pradyut Ghosh have written works on previously neglected districts of Howrah, Purulia, Birbhum and Maldah.

Still, a lot remains to be done in this field. In various parts of the world accepted national and regional boundaries are being challenged by local and indigenous aspirations. The cases of Catalonia, Venice, Naples, former Yugoslavia, Kurdistan and even Scotland can be cited as examples. In India, the demands of statehood for Saurashtra and Vidarbha by some groups are also worth noting. To appreciate the situation properly serious study of nano-history is a must. But in formal academic circles, especially in West Bengal, local history has not yet received its due place. Proper coordination
between Universities / Institutes and amateur scholars has not yet been achieved. So, serious academic studies of numerous villages, temples, tanks and markets in rural Bengal remain to be done. Here, the local histories written between 1850 and 1950 and their mostly amateur authors could act as inspirations.