

## **CHAPTER-II**

**The Idea and Origin of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti**

## CHAPTER- II

### THE IDEA AND ORIGIN OF THE KAMARUPA ANUSANDHANA SAMITI

The ancient history of Assam or *Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa*, the name by which the land was known from the dawn of its history is an almost unexplored and uninvestigated field of study <sup>1</sup>. The only source, which at the beginning of the nineteenth century were available to the students of the history were the traditions, legends and myths, which had been gradually in the course of many centuries accumulated with great epic pomp, the *Puranic* encyclopedias and provincial chronicles, written for the most part in scholastic sanskrit language by authors to whom history and fiction seem not to have appeared antagonistic. In these days great results were expected from researches in the astronomical works of the Hindus, with regard to their ancient chronology. These expectations have been only partially verified.

The Province of Assam and its people are very insufficiently known abroad, yet by its earlier name of Kamarupa. It is better known to Hindu India as a land of magic and witchcraft with its famous Tantric shrine of Kamakhya with which it is frequently associated together *Kamarupa-Kamakhya* <sup>2</sup>. Assam is the frontier province of India on the northeast. Its boundaries lies between twenty-fourth and twenty-eight degrees of North Latitude and eighty-ninth and ninety-

seventh degrees of East Longitude. It contains at present an area of 54000 square miles of which is little over 24000 square miles constitutes the plain districts, 19500 square miles, the southern hill tracts and the rest the tribal hill tracts to the north.<sup>3</sup>. Assam that forms a part of the Indian sub continent had a glorious past. The early period of the history of Assam is more glorious than the medieval or modern period, because it was during that period that Assam produced kings who made in north Indian politics <sup>4</sup>.

The present Assam valley or Brahmaputra valley became the center of political activities and civilization of Assam right from the early period. The history and culture of Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa are closely connected with river Brahmaputra (son of Brahma) or Lauhitya (the Sanskrit meaning Red river). Therefore, the history of the land is in a sense, the history of the civilization of the Brahmaputra Valley <sup>5</sup>. It is also important to note that almost all the inscriptions of ancient Kamarupa kings have been discovered in and around the valley of this river <sup>6</sup> except the Nidhanpur copperplate inscription of Bhaskarvarman. From the fourth century A.D to the beginning of the thirteenth century A.D.(till the advent of the Ahom in 1228) several dynasties ruled in this region. This has been established by the decipherment of copperplate inscription of Bhaskarman recovered at Nidhanpur and Doobi <sup>7</sup>. The provenance of other archaeological remains like architecture, sculptures and coins of early Assam have not been properly studied yet and it seems to be a challenging task for the scholars because mostly nothing has survived now excepting vast masses of shapeless remains. The

development of this type of art always depended upon the level quality and quantity of patronage of the royal courts of the past. The present city of Guwahati and its adjoining areas were a potential field of art and architecture throughout the historic period, as it remained the capital city of Kamarupa for a long time. In different parts of Guwahati city architectural pieces and sculptures of the pre Ahom period have been found. Goalpara region the western part of the Kamarupa kingdom had witnessed a vast cultural progress through the development of art architecture and sculpture with its regional characteristic. The Tezpur region had its own reputation of a rich cultural heritage. A large number of archaeological remains including temple ruins, sculpture with its coins and inscriptions have been discovered in the town of Tezpur and its adjoining areas. The earliest remains of the structural temple building have been found at Da-Parvatia , a village of the present town of Tezpur. The site was first brought to notice by K.N. Dikshit(Kashi Nath Dikshit) and was later explored by Rakhal Das Banerjee. In the Nagaon - Davaka region several archaeological sites of pre Ahom period are noticed. Ruins of old temple with an inscription of the sixth century A.D have been found at Barganga. Probably it was the earliest example of development of the temple architecture in this region. A Large number of archaeological remains of the Ahom period both brick and stone, secular and religious have come to light in the Doiyang Dhansiri valley and its adjoining areas.

It is an undenyng fact that the province has suffered from the three great enemies of archaeology- war that destroys both men and their handiworks,

luxurious vegetations that will crack and tear down the mightiest buildings, and a damp climate that obliterates nearly all things buried in the earth and many things on the surface. Yet a vast amount of material remains and it is the task of a research society to find and interpret it <sup>8</sup>. Until 1884, the attention of the government was not drawn to the preservation of ancient monuments in Assam. Even then the allocation made were too meager that maintenance and care of the antiquities had to be undertaken mainly by the local board, municipalities and munificent public <sup>9</sup>. Assam is a most inexhaustible mine of recorded materials. In addition to the inscriptions, we have in the country a large mass of documents and records as an offshoot of the historical instincts of the Assamese people. Long before the library movement was started in any part of the world the Assamese adopted the system of having a considerable quantity of useful literature in every family <sup>10</sup>. Compare to the huge amount of wealth lying scattered exploration is quite insignificant in Assam. Sir Edward Gait compiled his *A History of Assam* in 1905 exploring a part of materials available at hand. His work was based on colonial interest and therefore he is called as imperialist historian. Gunabhiram Barua <sup>11</sup> compiled a complete history of Assam <sup>12</sup> in 1884 consisting nineteen chapters and printed the book at New Arya Press Calcutta. He did not make use of either epigraph or inscriptions for compilation of his work. Padmanath Gohain Barua <sup>13</sup> also published two works in 1884 and 1899 respectively. Historical research to the study of the history of Assam was being carried out by a number of learned scholars, administrator and government officials both of Assamese origin

and non Assamese, however there was no institution or organization to conduct such activity with a common interest of enquiring in to the antiquities of ancient Assam. Assam was and still to some extent an unknown country and desire for information about the kingdom was in evidence even the days of the East India Company. The British officials who took keen interest in to the history of Assam were- Captain Thomas Welsh, Dr. John Peter Wade, Dr. Buchanan Hamilton, William Robinson, Henry Blochmann, Sir William Ward, A.J. Mofat Mills, Sir Charles James Lyall, T.C. Hodson, R.S. Eullde, P.R.T. Gurdon, A. Playfair, W.C. Smith, J.P. MILLS, J.H. Hutton, J.Shakespear, N.E. Parry, W.Shaw, Dr. Varier Elwin etc. The part played by American Baptist Mission, which first came to Assam in 1836 was a remarkable issue for the development of historical study in Assam <sup>14</sup>.

The historical importance of North eastern India and the necessity of reconstructing its early history was realized for the first time in 1835 when captain Westamacott<sup>15</sup> had reported about the ancient temples at the Charduar near Tezpur <sup>16</sup>. The earliest mention of the Pre Ahom <sup>17</sup> inscriptions of Assam appeared in 1840 in the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal <sup>18</sup>. Two inscriptions- the three copperplates and one seal forming what was subsequently known as the Tezpur Copperplate inscription of Vanamalavarmadeva (middle of the ninth century), and a grant of Dharmapala (twelfth century) were located and their text sent to the Asiatic Society, Calcutta by Captain Francis Jenkins, the Governor General's Agent in the North East Frontier. The significance of the epigraphs was

understood from the right from the out set. The great importance of the Indian inscriptions as a means of illustrating and completing our knowledge of the history of the country, fixing the eras of its dynasties, the character of its peculiar land tenures, the derivation and development of its various alphabets, and other subjects of like importance has been long since recognized by *Colebrooke*, *Prinsep* and other orientalists.

The British officers for the purpose of better and smooth administration of the newly acquired territory initiated the beginning of the study of the early history of Assam. Lord Cornwallis initiated this attempt when he sent an expedition under captain Thomas Welsh who visited Assam in 1792. The instruction <sup>19</sup> reads as:

“No pain should be spared to avail ourselves and to acquire every information that may be possible both the population and of the manners and customs of the inhabitants as well as the trade and manufactures and natural productions of country with which it must ever be our interest to maintain the most friendly communication”

Thus at the interest of the British administrators the start was made and in course of time number of reports and accounts through the government were published. Mention may be made of the following. J.P. Wade made *Historical and Geographical account of Assam*, Ensign Wood the surveyor of the expedition prepared Maps of the country, G.E. Westmacott *Ancient Temples and Ruins at Charduar*(1835), Francis Jenkins *Ancient Indian Grants on Copper, Discovered in*

*Assam* (1840), A .Vanis *Copper Plate Grant of Vaidyadeva king of Kamarupa* (1894), F. Kielhorn *Assam Plate of Vallabhadeva* (1898)

Beginning with the researches of G.E. Westmacott and down to Sir Edward Gait, British administrators lay the foundation of what we may call the 'modern' historical traditions of the region. The new and the fresh direction in historical research as distinct from the British presentation would take some time to become popular. Mean while research on the region and its people was being carried out by scholars from within the region and beyond in Dacca, Calcutta and elsewhere<sup>20</sup>. It is likely that the historians could not paid much attention to the micro level research on Assam and as a result many important aspects are yet to be brought to focus in terms of historical research. The history of North East India has not been given adequate attention in the history of India. There were huge literary assistances, which could be utilized by the national historians to fill up the gap of historical research on India as a whole. There are no references to the tribes. Interestingly one does not come across the life and condition of the hill tribes who lived in some hill region long before the coming and settlement of the Turk Mughal and the British. The history of British colonialism too neglects the region<sup>21</sup>.

In 1897 Sir Edward Gait published *Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam* embodying in it a digest of Inscriptions, coins, and some historical manuscripts and other source materials. It is a document of unique historical importance to stimulate in depth studies on the antiquities and history of

Assam<sup>22</sup>. He pointed out that a vast field had been lying unexplored and official steps should be taken immediately. Gait collected various kinds of source materials and prepared a comprehensive list of Assamese manuscripts<sup>23</sup>. Gait in his pioneering work *A History of Assam*<sup>24</sup> made extensive use of the inscriptions in reconstructing the pre Ahom history of the region. However partly because of his own perspectives, and also because Assamese epigraphic studies had not achieved a great degree of sophistication only fourteen pages were devoted in his book<sup>25</sup> to the period between the fourth and thirteenth century. However one must agree that his work was a great inspiration for the historians of Assam to choose the field of interest of the study of ancient period. The British interest in the monuments of the past must be viewed in the proper context. Confronted with a world very much different from their own they came to realize that every bit of information however remote it might seem contributes towards a total understanding of the colonial reality. Archaeology by no means was their basic concern, but on the process, they made the pioneering attempt. Indian involvement at this state remained marginal the exception to this was Jogesh Chandra Dutta's *Old Relics of Kamarupa* (Calcutta 1892) a useful collection of Medieval inscription of Assam<sup>26</sup>.

Assamese possess a mass of epigraphs relevant to preparation of a systematic history of the land. Rock inscriptions, land grants, *Peda Kakat*<sup>27</sup> Judicial documents, historio-mythological work, family vamsavalis and copper plates<sup>28</sup>.

Progress of historical study on nineteenth century Assam was due to the efforts of a band of Assamese chroniclers, spearheaded by Haliram Dhekial Phukan <sup>29</sup>. In his *Assam Buranji*(1829) written in four parts and in Bengali language, the author besides giving adequate description of the history of ancient and medieval Assam, deals with its geographical, social and economic conditions. Another very important history of the period is Maniram Dewan,s unpublished *Buranji Vivek Ratna*. Bisweswar Bidyadhip wrote *Belimara Buranji* (1833-38). Kashinath Tamuli Phukan *Assam Buranji Saar* (1844) Dutiram Hazarika *Kalibharat Buranji* (1862) and Harakanta Barua Sadar Amin *Assam Buranji* (1870-85) <sup>30</sup>. Nevertheless in spite of this progress the epigraphic source materials carried the status of ‘discoveries’. To put it another way, even in 1884 Gunabhiram Barua, while writing on the pre Ahom period gave a brief account of the mythological kings relying almost solely on scanty and unconnected accounts of some medieval chronicles. No attempt was made to collate and relate information supplied by the inscriptions to write a systematic history of ancient Assam.<sup>31</sup>. The Bengali writers also played a significant role in unearthing the past history of Assam. The contributions are noted as-

Ranglal Banerjee – *Certain Tribes of the Puranas with those noticed in Dalthon’s Ethnology of Bengal.*

Pandit Ramkumar Vidyaratna- *An Account of Assam.*

Tarachand Chakraborty- *Review of Haliram Dhekial Phukan’s*

*History of Assam.*

M.N. Ghosh            *Religious Belief of the Assamese People.*

In 1876, Tarini Prosad Sen, a Bengali historian compiled *Bijni Rajbangsha*, a history of Bijni dynasty of Western Assam. The book was published by Jagabandhu Samanta and printed at Hitbidhayini Yantra, (Hitsadhini Press) Goalpara.<sup>32</sup>

The foundation of the Asiatic Society of Bengal on 15<sup>th</sup> of January 1784 marked the beginning of Indological research in an organized way. It also paved the way for the foundation of a number of similar institutions to investigate in to the past. It may however be mentioned that the management of the Asiatic Society of Bengal remained in the hands of the Europeans only<sup>33</sup>. Following the ideals of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and being inspired by its activities a number of voluntary institutions of antiquarians grew up in different parts of India for investigating in to and study of regional and local history. In the eastern part of India alone several such societies were founded. The spread of English education and through it Western thought contributed by and large what is known as renaissance or reawakening in India in the nineteenth century. A remarkable change occurred in the age long beliefs, values and concept of Indian life and culture. The newly emerging middle class elite aware of the dynamic nature of western civilization eagerly accepted its salient features without discarding the basic values and best traditions of Indian cultures. The scientific and critical spirits through English education enable them to reassess and re-examine ancient scriptures and classical language.

Scholars have hitherto pursued investigations in to the history, literature and antiquities of Assam mainly in their individual capacity without much of the facilities placed at their disposal by a well established and organized research institution. Their efforts have attained the success possible under the limitations of the circumstances. That further achievements would be possible with the stimulating help and encouragement of a research society established on a sound and solid basis will not be denied by anybody. Research work is always expensive, and the financial limitations of an individual investigator cannot create for him the facilities with which alone he can pursue his labours with fruitful results. The ultimate beneficiaries of all historical investigations are the society of which the individual scholar is only a constituent part.

During the beginning of the twentieth century a nationwide movement for study in to the regional history was generated by the various regional historical research organization under the patronage of the colonial government. As nationalism was on its infant stage the spirit of regionalism accelerate nationalism to grow faster and the regional history helps to grow national history more popular.

In September 1894 Sir Edward Gait submitted a note to the Government of Assam in which the different sources from which information regarding the past history of Assam might be brought were classified and detailed proposals were made regarding the manner in which the action should be taken in order to render such information available. He classified the sources in to five categories <sup>34</sup>. To

indologist working in a wider field, Assam is a new mine for exploration, apart from the fusion of the Aryan and non Aryan elements, and their co-existence parallel or separate developments traceable in the social religious and political institutions of the people, the ruins and remnants of its ancient architecture and iconography will help us to reinterpret those of other parts of India. The remains of the undated history of *Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa* consist of neoliths, megaliths and pottery. They are helpful for knowing the pre-Aryan and non-Aryan elements of the land. The object of forming a research society is to link the people of ancient Assam with those of the other parts of India and the oceanic world and helps in understanding the origin and foundation of the culture of the land <sup>35</sup>.

Untill the establishment of Cotton College <sup>36</sup> at Gauhati there was no institutions of higher education in Assam in the Barhmaputra Valley. The history of Cotton College is inextricably linked with the making of modern Assam. Started in 1901 A.D., this seat of higher learning has brought about a renaissance in almost every area of human activity viz. literature, language, politics, cultural activities and public life could be seen and felt <sup>37</sup>. Cotton College received permission to include History in F.A. Class in 1908. Realizing the importance and necessity of historical research in Assam one T.K. Bhattacharyya <sup>38</sup> remarked:

“It is a sound and oft repeated suggestion that professors, if they are not stagnate, should engage themselves in some kind of research work, should undertake periodic travels and keep themselves informed of the work that are being done in other countries in their respective field. Yet not in many

Indian Universities professors get the necessary leisure and opportunities. In Assam these are still more limited. Prior to the establishment of the Cotton College there was not even anything like a platform, even after the establishment some years had to elapse before got opportunities and stimulus for research”<sup>39</sup>

In the same light Principal David Thomson of Cotton College also wrote <sup>40</sup>:

“Isolated as we are here and with very heavy teaching and administrative duties, and only moderate library facilities, worthwhile research is far from easy. All the more credit therefore is due to those members of the staff who succeeded in doing something to extend the boundaries of knowledge in their subjects despite their grave handicaps”

Assam displays a vast and almost virgin field such a few learned societies in the world are fortunate enough to have before them. <sup>41</sup> It should be noted that no reliable chronicles dealing with the early history of Assam has come down to us. So that the history of the period has to be reconstructed on the basis of various sources, the most important of them being the epigraphic. Ancient inscriptions of any region contain the most reliable source materials for its history. This is more glaringly noticed in the case of the history of ancient Assam. It is seen that the other source materials are not adequate, and in most cases the references found therein are scanty and confusing, and sometimes they even present conflicting evidences. <sup>42</sup> Assam has yielded some antiquities of the Stone Age and also some architectural and sculptural remains of the ancient period here and there.

The Asiatic society became a center for organized research and hundreds of articles were published in its journal. After William Jones indological Studies developed mainly on two lines. The first was the critical study of ancient Indian texts and documents and the second archaeological discovery and study of old inscriptions, coins and monuments <sup>43</sup>. In the study of the earlier history of any civilized region of the earth's surface inscriptions form an important class of sources which cannot be ignored if we want our picture of the past to be as complete and reliable as possible. The study of the past history of Greece and Rome also established it. Assam came under the British rule nearly a century after company's contact with Bengal. Naturally Assam lagged behind Bengal in receiving modern education, which was mainly responsible for the new awakening of Bengal <sup>44</sup>. The impact of this reawakening in Assam was purely literary however from the middle of the nineteenth century individual efforts were on to eradicate some social evils<sup>45</sup> through literature. But there was no organized movement as in Bengal. Bengal was, and still is united by a very strong factor: the Bengali language. Assam lacks this homogeneity due to presence of different cultural, social and language groups with their individual dialect, which forms a separate identity, though the official and court language was Assamese.<sup>46</sup>

In Bengal, the Bengal Academy of Literature was established in July 23, 1893 with its aim to the study of Bengali literature and publication of the result of that study, with a view to popularize the literature of Bengal <sup>47</sup>. The objectives of the Academy were the publication of the comprehensive Bengali Dictionary, the

Bengali Grammar written on scientific lines, the history of the origin of the Bengali language, the study of the names of the places, persons and rivers, the collection of inscriptions and other records found in different parts of Bengal and the collection of other evidences, Bengal's history and culture in order to discover the past of the *Swades* i.e our country <sup>48</sup>. The advice given by Professor Max Mueller and others for the purpose were put in to practice in course of time by the contemporary intellectuals like Ramendra Sunder Trivedi, Haraprasad Sastri, Rabinndranath Tagore, Yogeshchandra Roy Vidyanidhi, Nagendranath Vasu, Rakhal Das Bandopadhyay, Nalinikanta Bhattasali, Suniti Kumar Chattopadhyay, Ramesh Chandra Mazumdar, Sushil Kumar Dey, Rama Prasad Chanda, Sarat Kumar Ray, Dinesh Chandra Sen, Sukumar Sen, Chintaharan Chakravorty, Dinesh Chandra Sirkar, Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharyya, Brajendranath Bandopadhyay, Jogesh Chandra Bagal and others. They either individually or jointly undertake to contribute papers <sup>49</sup>. By the advice of Rajnatan Basu the Academy was renamed as the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* on February 18, 1894.<sup>50</sup> In course of a decade, the branches of the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* were established all over Bengal. The efforts of the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* towards the reconstruction of the ancient history of Bengal were quite evident from the papers published in the *Sahitya Parishat Patrika* <sup>51</sup> monograph published by the *Parishat* and the archaeological museum of the *Parishat*.

Being inspired by the success of the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat*, it decided to establish its branches outside Calcutta in a special meeting held in 1905.

Accordingly a branch was immediately established at Rangpur (Presently at Bangladesh)<sup>52</sup>. It was first of its kind outside Calcutta. Although the branch was named as *Rangpur Sahitya Parisad*, the elites of *Uttarbanga* the landlords and intellectuals of a considerably large tract mentioned as North Bengal or North Central Bengal or Central North Bengal patronized the organization in various capacities. The *Rangpur Sahitya Parisad Patrika* appeared as its mouthpiece. The primary object of the Parisad was the archaeological discoveries in North Bengal and Assam.<sup>53</sup> In course of time thirty other branches of the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* were established in several districts of Bengal (Rajshahi, Dacca, Commilla) as well as outside of Bengal (Gauhati). Thus the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* inspired intellectuals of North Bengal and Assam to come forward for the reconstruction of the history and culture of their locality. It is a fact that Assam and Bengal together from very early times joined hands in spreading ideas and practices bearing on Indian ideals and learning, whatever the differences that may have marked their social structure and language and culture.<sup>54</sup>

North Bengal and a part of east Bengal was earlier a part of ancient Kamarupa. There are still strong traditions of the cultural, historical and political connection between Kamarupa and the border districts of Bengal in the past.<sup>55</sup> Till the reign of Koch king Naranarayan, in the sixteenth century the whole of Jalpaiguri was within Kamarupa. Purnea and Kamarupa were co-terminus on the north and Pundravardhana or Varendra was to the south of Kamarupa. Pundravardhana actually comprised the Bengal districts of Dinajpur, Maldah,

Rajshahi and the Western parts of Bogra and Rangpur, but the whole of the northern belt of modern Bengal comprising Jalpaiguri, Cooch-Bihar and part of Rangpur, was always within Kamarupa.<sup>56</sup> The Ahom King Rudra Singha<sup>57</sup> patronizes the art architecture and higher learning, for that purpose he established numbers of *Tols* for the study of Sanskrit and at the same time the Brahmins were send to Bengal to study in various reputed institutions in Bengal. Brahmins were also send to Kashi, Nawadwip to study Sanskrit. The medium of instructions of the *Tols* was sanskrit and it was felt necessary to study Sanskrit for the development of Assamese language after the Ahom accepted the Assamese language.<sup>58</sup> The tradition is continued till the beginning of the twentieth century. Indeed the history and culture of Bengal, in particular the adjoining districts of northern Bengal including Koch Bihar was seen not so much as an extension of the history and culture of Kamarupa but as an integral part of that history.

It will be worthwhile to mention that Assamese scholars and antiquarians were thus came in contact with the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* and attended its conferences and contributed scholarly papers on the antiquities of Assam.<sup>59</sup> Among them mention may be made of Mahamahopadhyay Dhireswara Bhattacharyya Kaviratna, Pandit Hemchandra Goswami, Pandit Pratap Chandra Goswami, Ananda Chandra Dev Goswami, Siddhi Nath Sarma, Harmohan Das, Ratnakanta Barkakati, Chandra Nath Sarma and Sarbeswar Kataki.<sup>60</sup> Thus one can observe that the inspiration of the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* to undertake historical enquiry regarding the antiquity of Assam was one of its objectives from its

inception and for that purpose a branch of the Parishat was established at Gauhati in 1908.<sup>61</sup> The ground is already prepared and there had been a proposal to form a historical research society for the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. But the proposal did not come in to effect on account of the dissolution of Eastern Bengal and Assam as announced<sup>62</sup> at the coronation Durbar in Delhi on December 12, 1911 by King George V, just a little over six years after the experiment was implemented and less than four months before the foundation of the Kamarupa Anusandhana Samiti.<sup>63</sup> Meanwhile under the patronage of Kumar Sarat Kumar Ray M.A. of Rajshahi the Varendra Anusandhan Samiti was founded on 27 September 1910.<sup>64</sup>

The formation of Varendra Anusandhan Samiti at Rajshahi under the patronage of the individual effort inspired the antiquarians of Assam to become more confident. The one individual whose contribution in the unofficial circle for the formation of a historical research society in Assam is always to be gratefully remembered. He was Mahamahopadhyaya Padmanath Bhattacharyya Vidyavinod. He joined Cotton College, Guwahati as a professor in Sanskrit in the year 1905. Prior to that assignment he was appointed at Murarichand College, Syhlet on the same capacity. He was conferred the title of 'Vidyavinod' by *Purva Banga Saraswat Samaj*. Padmanath Bhattacharyya was closely associated with the Rangpur Sahitya Parisad and made valuable contribution to it.<sup>65</sup>

The contributions made by Padmanath Bhattacharyya to the field of historical studies in Assam are therefore immense; for it is he who first laid the

foundation of the reliable historical materials for the construction of the history of Assam in its ancient period. He started with the limited objective of acquainting the learned society of neighbouring Bengal with the history of Assam by introducing to its various events of Assam through articles written in Bengali. For this purpose the *Banga Sahityanusilani Sabha* was established at Gauhati in the year 1908.<sup>66</sup> The learned circle of Assam could make an entry to the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* through the delegation of *Banga Sahityanusilani Sabha*.

Padmanath. Bhattacharyya quoted in his own words<sup>67</sup>:

“Though the province of Assam is very close to Bengal and many Bengalese had settled here, still the Bengali does not properly knew the real story of Assam, the Bengali people contrary to it they have many wrong notions about Assam and innumerable fantastic stories about the beliefs and customs of the Assam as a land of sorcery and magic came to be widely prevalent”.

With this object in view when the activities of the above Sabha could attract the attention of the European officers interested in historical pursuits and could enlist the cooperation of the local scholars like Pandit Hemchandra Goswami, Mahamahopadhyaya Dhireswara Bhattacharyya Kaviratna, it became transformed in to the Gauhati Branch of the Bengali Literary Association. Simultaneously the activities of the said *Banga Sahityaanusilani Sabha* were merged with those of the North Bengal Literary Conference

( *Uttar Banga Sahitya Sanmela*) incorporating the whole of Assam in to the sphere of its activities <sup>68</sup>.

In the meantime, a conference of the *Uttar Banga Sahitya Sanmela* was held at the premises of the sacred temple of Kamakhya in the month of April 1912 under the president ship of Babu Sasadhar Rai <sup>69</sup>. In the conference a good number of papers relating to the antiquities, history and archaeology of early kingdom of *Pragjyotisa-Kamarupa* were read and discussed. The members who were present in the conference felt greatly the need of establishing a scholarly society for carrying researches on ancient Kamarupa in particular and northeastern region in general. A proposal for establishing such a society in Assam it self in the line of the Varendra Anusandhan Samiti was unanimously adopted. The proposal was made by Khan Choudhury Amanatullah Ahmad of Koch Behar and supported by Rai Mritunjoy Chowdhary M.R.A.S. of Rangpur <sup>70</sup>. The newly founded organization was named as the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti, subsequently known as Assam Research Society.

Thus the Kamarupa Anusandhana Samiti formally came in to being on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1912 with the following members <sup>71</sup>.

1. Mahamahopadhyaya Dhireswaracharyya Kaviratna.
2. Ananda Chandra Vedantabagish
3. Padmanath Bhattacharyya Vidyavinod, M.A.
4. Sivanath Smrititirtha
5. Uttam Chandra Barua

6. Gobinda Chandra Sarma
7. Taranath Kavyavinod
8. Pratap Chandra Goswami
9. Rajani Kumar Das
10. Gopal Krishna Dey
11. Suresh Chandra Bandopadhyaya
12. Umesh Chandra Dey

The report of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti 1916-17, mentioned that it was Padmanath Bhattacharyya, Vidyavinod, who first conceived the idea of forming the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti. The report further says that without his help and cooperation the Samiti would not have come to the present stage <sup>72</sup>. Later on Chandra Nath Sarma <sup>73</sup> and Babu Gopal Krishna De <sup>74</sup> were selected as secretary and assistant secretary of the Samiti. Padmanath Bhattacharyya undertook to help the secretary in all matters including the correspondence works.

The Samiti then approached some august personages and was fortunate to secure the following patrons;

The Hon'ble Sir Archdale Earle, K.C.I.E, I.C.S., Chief Commissioner of Assam.

The Hon'ble Sir Edward Gait, K.C.S.I. Lt. Governor of Bihar and Orissa.

The Hon'ble Lt. Col P.R.T. Gurdon, C.S.I, C.I.E, Commissioner of Assam District and honorary Director of Ethnography in Assam.

His Highness the Maharaja Sir Jitendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur of Cooch Bihar

The Hon'ble Raja Prabhat Chandra Barua Bahadur of Gauripur, Assam.

The Samiti was fortunate enough to enlist the support as honorary members of such stalwarts in indological research who were associated with similar institution on the other parts of India. The fact that almost all the leaders of the antiquarian societies of eastern India of the time were associated with the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti in one capacity or the other added prestige to the Samiti which also demonstrates the deep involvement of these patriotic minded scholars in unfolding the ancient past more particularly of this region and with its jurisdiction for research works over the area formerly included in the sacred and ancient kingdom of *Pragjyotisa-Kamarupa*, comprising of modern Assam and the neighboring states of North Bengal including Cooch Behar and East Bengal (Presently Bangladesh). Thus the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti (K.A.S) came in to being as a result of noble efforts of some distinguished and patriotic scholars with a view to promoting research and disseminating knowledge on matters related to history, archaeology, ethnography, language and literature and allied subjects with emphasis on those relating to the area that was formerly included in the ancient kingdom of *Pragjyotisa-Kamarupa*. The foundation of the Samiti was so widely hailed and generated so much of enthusiasm that many delegates attending the conference and participants offered to enroll themselves as members of the Samiti and offered donation on the spot <sup>75</sup>. With a view to extend its

activities a branch of the Samiti was set up at Rangpur ( presently in Bangladesh) and the secretary of the Rangpur Sahitya Parisad<sup>76</sup> was assigned as Secretary of the branch of the Samiti. Most significantly the universe of “Kamarupa” part of the sacred territory of *Puranic* geography as perceived and presented in these efforts, saw Assam not as a remote and isolated outpost of India as the colonial government did it by making off on its maps large parts of the province as ‘excluded’ areas ‘partially excluded’ areas, and ‘unadministered areas’ but in inclusive terms as part of a larger cultural and geographical terrain that was linked not merely to Bengal but to border Pan Indian and even more inclusive universe of *Bharatvarsha* from *Puranic* times-hence its sacredness.<sup>77</sup>

### Notes and references

1. Choudhury.P.C, *History of Civilization of the people of Assam to the twelfth century A.D*, Third revised edition, Guwahati, 1985, p.1
2. Gupta H.L. Presidential Address, Indian History Congress, Channdigarh, 1973.
3. Barua.B.K., *A Cultural History of Assam*, fourth edition, Bina Library, Guwahati, 2003, p.1

4. Kumar Bhaskarman the King of Kamarupa was a contemporary ruler of Sri Harshavardhana of Kanauj and both made for offensive and defensive alliance.
5. Choudhury N.D., *Archaeology of Central Assam*, B.R. Publishing Co, Delhi, 1996, p.1
6. Lahiri Nayanjot, *Pre Ahom Assam*, first edition, New Delhi, 1991, p.29
7. Located at a distance of three kilometers south of Pathsala railway station of North East Frontier Railway Under Barpeta District of Assam. Famous for Parihareswar Devalaya.
8. Mills.J. P. Assam as a field of Research, *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, vol.1, Guwahati, 1933, pp.4-5.
9. Barpujari.H.K., Our neglected archaeological remains, *The Assam Tribune*, August13, 1989.
10. Bhuyan.S.K. *Studies in the History of Assam*, second edition, Omson publication, Delhi, 1985, p.228
11. Gunabhiram Sarma, later on Rai Bahadur Gunabhiram Barua was born in 1834. He wrote a complete history of Assam in 1875, which was published in 1884. He was the editor of *Asam Bandhu*
12. *Asam Buranji*, a history in Assamese was published in 1884 by Rai Bahadur Gunabhiram Barua. The book contains nineteen chapters, one hundred seventy one pages.

13. Rai Bahadur Padmanath Gohain Barua, M.R.A.S. was born in 1871 at Sibsagar. His contribution towards Assamese history and literature are well recognized. His contributions to history were *Buranji Bodh*, *Asamar Buranji*, *Hindu Buranji*. He compiled the biography of queen Victoria.
14. Bhuyan.S.K., Presidential Address, *Indian History Congress*, Guwahati, 1959
15. Geoge Edward Westmacott, Junior Assistant of the Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier (19March 1833-29November,1835). He wrote three volumes of History of Assam in 1834.
16. G.E. Westmacott, Description of some ancient temple of ruins at Charduar in Assam *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol.iv, 1835, p1.
17. The term *pre Ahom* is being used here for the period before the thirteen century because for North east India that terms gives a clearer historical picture in terms of time and space than terms like pre colonial.
18. Francis Jenkins, Ancient Indian Grants on Copper, Discovered at Assam, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol.ix, 1840,pp766-782ff.
19. Lt. Col. J. Johnstone, *Captain Welsh Expedition to Assam in 1792-94*, 1912, see also Mackenzie's *North East Frontier of Bengal*.
20. Annual Report of archaeological Survey of India, 1974,p.98
21. Syiemlieh, David R. The North East, NEIHA and Indian History, *Proceeding of the North East India History Association*, Shillong, 2004,p.424

22. Barpujari.H.K., *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, vol.v, Publication Board, Assam, 1993, p.227
23. Barua. Rai Bahadur K.L, *Early History Kamarupa*, third edition, Lawyers Book Stall, Guwahati, 1988, p.11
24. *A History of Assam* by Sir Edward Gait , first published in 1905, revised edition 1926.
25. The 1926 revised edition that was later reprinted with editorial notes was devoted with minimum information about the newly discovered epigraphic records pertaining to fourth to thirteenth century.
26. Singh.J.P and Sengupta G, *Archaeology of North East India*, New Delhi, 1971, p.2
27. The original land record held by the Royal Court of Ahom.
28. Gogoi. L., *The Buranji: Historical Literature of Assam*, Omson Publications, Guwahati, 1986, p.iv
29. Haliram Dhekial Phukan (1802-1832) was the first Assamese nobles who was appointed by David Scott for land settlement. He wrote the first *Asam Buranji* in 1829 in Bengali language. The *Buranji* was published in four parts.
30. Goswami.S.D, *Progress of Historical Research in North East India, A Survey, Proceeding of the North East India History Association*, Shillong, vol. xiv, 1993,pp.355-357.
31. Lahiri Nayanjot, *op.cit.* p.4

32. see Barman Prasun (ed) *Bijni Rajbangsha* by Tarini Prosad Sen, first edition, Guwahati, 2007
33. Bhuyan.S.K, Presidential Address, *Indian History Congress*, Guwahati Session, December 1959.
34. See E.A. Gait, *Progress of Historical Research in Assam*, 1897,p.1. The note was published in the proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, June 1895.
35. Das Chakradhar, *The Political and Cultural Centres in Pragjyotisa-Kamarupa*, unpublished Ph.D Thesis of University of North Bengal, 1993,p.6
36. In the name of Sir Henry John Stedman Cotton, the first institution of collegiate education in the Brahmaputra Valley was established at Guwahati on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1901. Frederik William Sudmerson was its founder Principal.
37. Bharali.Udayaditya, *Hundred years History of Cotton College (1901-2001)*, Guwahati, 2001,p.xi.
38. Tarini Kanta Bhattacharyya (1918-1979) joined Cotton College in 1947 as lecturer in English and become Principal of the said college in 1969.
39. Barpujari.H.K. (ed) *Souvenir, Cotton College Golden Jubilee Volume*, Guwahati, 1952, p.7
40. Ibid.
41. Mills.J.P, op.cit. p.4

42. Sarma M.M. *Inscriptions of Ancient Assam*, preface, Guwahati, 1978
43. Sreedharan .E, A Textbook of Historiography 500B.C. to AD 2000, first edition, 2005, p.392
44. Barpujari.H.K. op.cit,p.228
45. Social evils like untouchables, slavery, polygamy, drinking of liquor, use of opium, widow remarriage etc. Gunabhiram Barua remarried widow Bishnupriya Devi after the death of his wife Brajasundari Devi in 1867.
46. Sarma Sukanya, Unique Struggle, *Frontline*, Vol.23, Issue 19, September 23- October 2006.
47. Kumar Madanmohan, *Vangiya Sahitya Parisader Itihasa*, Pratham Parva, Calcutta, 1381 B.S., p.23
48. Ibid.
49. A plan of work was drawn up by which each member or any two members would jointly undertake to make himself or themselves master of a division of literature and write a paper thereon.
50. Kumar. M.M. , op.cit. p.104
51. The monthly periodical of the *Vangiya Sahitya Parishat*, the first editor was Rajanikanta Gupta.
52. Accordingly on 11<sup>th</sup> Baisakh 1312 B.S. (1905) Rangpur Sahitya parisad started with twenty eight members as a branch of Bangiya Sahitya Parisat, Rangpur Branch. See Proceedings of the *Rangpur Sahitya Parisad* and its eight years work, p.3

53. Ibid. p.72.
54. Choudhury Pratap Chandra, *Assam-Bengal Relation from the earliest times to the twelfth century A.D*, first edition, Guwahati, 1988, p.252.
55. Barua Rai Bahadur K.L. op.cit. p.75
56. Ibid. p.72
57. Rudra Singha (1695-1714) the famous Ahom king who patronized education and the first king to accept Hinduism.
58. Devi.L, *Asom Deshar Buranji*, fifth edition, Lawyers Book Stall, Guwahati, 1987, p.382.
59. Pandit Hemchandra Goswami's article titled 'Kamakhya Mandir' was published in *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat Patrika*, Part 25, 1325 B.S. pp. 77-83, another article titled 'Asame Sri Chaitnya' was published in part 22, pp. 241-248.
60. Goswami.D. & Katak. S. (ed) *Swargiya Pandit Hemchandra Goswami, A Bibliography of the works of Pandit Hemchandra Goswami*, first publication, Guwahati, 1931, p.x.
61. The *Banga Sahityaanusilani Sabha* was established at Gauhati in 1908 and subsequently transformed in to Gauhati Branch of Bengali Literary Association.
62. Creation of a Governorship-in-Council for the Presidency of Bengal, of a new Lieutenant Governorship-in –council administrating the areas of Bihar, Chota Nagpur and Orissa and of a Chief commissionership of Assam, see

Dutta.K.K. *Renaissance, Nationalism and Social Change in Modern India*, p.37.

63. Prabhakar.M.S, Looking back in to future, *Frontline*, Aug 2003.

64. The Varendra Research Society was formally inaugurated on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1910.

65. Bharali H. Padmanath Vidyavinod (1868-1938), *Asom Kosh*, Dibrugarh, 2005, p.273

66. Sarma D. (ed) *Kamarupa Sasanavali* (English), Guwahati, 1985, p.1

67. Bhattacharyya P.N, *Kamarupa Sasanavali* (Bengali) Rangpur Sahitya Parisad, 1932, p.1

68. Sarma.D. loc.cit.

69. A reputed pleader of the Calcutta High Court

70. Das.M.C. History of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti, *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, vol.xxi, Guwahati, 1973, p.1

71. Sarma.C.N, (ed) *The Works of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti*, Guwahati, 1920,p1

72. Ibid. Report of the year 1916-17.

73. Chandra Nath Sarma (1889-1922) was graduated from Cotton College in 1914. Initially he joined as a teacher but later on he took over legal profession. He is popularly known as *Karmaveer* and *Pit* of Assam.

74. Librarian of the Curzon Hall Library, the first public library of Assam, now named as Nabin Bordoloi Hall.

75. Babu Sasadhar Rai, the President of the conference donated twenty five rupees on the spot. There are other small amounts, which do not require special mention.
76. Babu Surendra Chandra Roychoudhuri was assigned, as secretary of the Rangpur Branch of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti No detail information is available regarding the works undertaken.
77. Prabhakaran. M.S. op.cit.
-