

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

Trends in the Regional Historical Research in Colonial India

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It is a fact that modern research in the history of ancient India began only in the second half of the eighteenth century to serve the need of the British colonial administration. When Bengal and Bihar fell under the rule of the East India Company in 1765, they found it difficult to administer the Hindu law of inheritance. The initial effort to understand ancient laws and customs, which continued largely until the eighteenth century, culminated in the establishment in Calcutta of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, set up by a civil servant of the East India Company, Sir William Jones in 1784.

The revolt of 1857 caused Britain to realize that they needed a deeper knowledge of the manners and social system of an alien people over whom she ruled. To meet these needs ancient scriptures were translated under the editorship of Max Mueller out of which Indian texts were predominant. In the introduction of these volumes and the books based on them Max Mueller and other western scholars made certain generalizations about the nature of ancient Indian history and society. The British interpretations of Indian history served to denigrate the Indian character and achievements and justify colonial rule. The generalizations made by colonist historians were by and large either false or exaggerated, but

served as good propaganda material for the perpetuation of the despotic British rule.

This naturally came as a great challenge to Indian scholars particularly to those who had received western education. A band of scholars took upon themselves not only the mission to reform Indian society but also to reconstruct ancient Indian history in such a way as to make a case for special reforms and, more importantly, for self government. In doing so, most historians were guided by the nationalist ideas of Hindu revivalism, but there was no dearth of scholars who adopted a rationalist and objective approach. Filled with legitimate national pride, a rising generation of Indian scholars sought to vindicate their national culture against the unfounded charges of European writers. Earlier there grew a tendency of generalizing about the subcontinent from the perspective of the Ganges valley. Due to the spread of nationalism in the various states, there was increased interest in regional history. Early attempts at regional history were motivated primarily to locate new source material. In the Indian context it may be said that regional histories have singular importance and serve as a corrective measure in respect of the generalization given during colonial and post colonial period.

India is a vast country with diversity. In such a large country the history written on nationalistic outlook cannot represent all equally. As a result a valuable approach to study history develops from nationalist historiography, which is termed as regional or local history. The result of this studies filled many missing

information in historical knowledge and acted as a corrective to some of the earlier accepted information on national history. The growth of interest in regional history develops the idea of establishing regional historical research societies in various parts of India under the inspiration of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

The *Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti* or Assam Research Society is a regional historical research society established in 1912 with the aim of undertaking research into history, archaeology, ethnography and allied subjects to investigate the ancient history of *Pragjyotisa-Kamarupa*, i.e. ancient Assam. The present Assam valley or Brahmaputra valley became the centre of political activities and civilization of Assam right from the early period. The region possesses a rich ancient heritage dating back to the epic age when it was referred to as *Pragjyotisa* with its capital at *Pragjyotisapura*, the present city of Guwahati. Historical materials on which a reliable framework of the history of this region can be reconstructed, but unfortunately the outcome of such endeavour is extremely meager till date. However, for the prehistoric period we have to depend mainly on some neolithic and megalithic findings. Again for the historical period we have only a few local epigraphs and isolated literary documents, historical or otherwise. Besides, there are some legendary accounts and myths though varied, confusing and doubtful in their historical authenticity to make a sound history of this ancient land. Scholars have individually attempted to throw some light on the ancient history of *Pragjyotisa-Kamarupa* with the findings of the epigraphic investigation and study. Some of these writings are confined in the journals, which require

further study as major works are written in the local language. Furthermore the initiative for meaningful research was not up to mark and this tendency had practically made this region unknown to the outer world despite its rich heritage and cultural tradition. The colonial government for the sake of their administration took initiative for collection and preservation of ancient manuscripts and decipherment of the inscriptions discovered in this region. The establishment of the Department of Ethnography in 1894 was a positive step in this direction. The sources of the pre Ahom period of the history of Assam are scattered and scanty. Even then we have at our disposal some epigraphic sources, which need to be verified with the textual materials for a dependable history. Thus we have a chronology of the rulers of *Pragjyotisa-Kamarupa* from fourth to thirteenth century. The period before fourth century is supported by legendary accounts on ancient *Kamarupa*, which require further scrutiny in order to produce a scientific base of historical research on Assam and her neighbouring states. For example, with the advent of the *Ahom* and their settlement in Assam, they adopted Assamese as their working language, which did not change though there were series of foreign invasions during their reign of six hundred years. The court historians and other nobles compiled the *Buranjis* which, in many ways, were biased and concocted for obvious reasons. The *Satras*, the centre of *Vaishnava* culture and religion, also preserved their historical accounts systematically and regularly. These chronicles are not only numerous but varied in character. But they have not been fully explored and investigated. Most of the

Buranjis are handwritten and under private possession. As a result of natural calamities like flood, fire, earthquake and wars, many of them have been completely damaged. Assam is the homeland of various tribes who live in isolated hilly areas. During the pre *Ahom* and even in pre-colonial periods, we have no historical records of these tribes as they had no knowledge of Sanskrit or Assamese language. However, they have their rich tradition and culture from time immemorial. There may be a serious study as to present a comprehensive history of the region. During the colonial period the British scholar administrators made extensive studies of various tribes being produced in monograph forms but these are not sufficient for a complete view about the numerous tribal communities of the region.

But it is a fact that in spite of various constraints and limitations, the European scholars opened a new chapter of historical investigation and research on Assam. Though their basic purpose was for colonial interest but one cannot ignore the inspiration that enlightened and inspired the local intellectuals and scholars to realize the necessity of historical research of the region. They also realized the importance of the sources for the reconstruction of the history of ancient Assam.

From *Yogini Tantra* it is known that the land of ancient *Kamarupa* was extended from Nepal in the north to the confluence of *Brahmaputra* in the South and from Karotoya in the West to the Dikshu in the east. It reveals that *Pragjyotisa-Kamarupa* included not only the whole of Assam but also a

substantial part of North and East Bengal (present Bangladesh) and the hill tracts up to the border of China. However it appears while some parts of the region interacted politically with one another more often than the kingdoms lying outside the eastern part of the territory is more closely connected with Bengal than with rest of the country. Prior to the establishment of the institutions of higher education in Assam the aspirants used to go for study in Bengal. From the days of King Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.) the *Brahmins* were sent to nearby Bengal for studying Sanskrit. He personally adopted the Bengal culture, dress etc., asked his nobles to welcome it and invited scholars from Bengal to settle in Assam. Thus the Assamese scholars had a close contact with *Bengali* literature, its history and culture. After the annexation of Assam in to British administration more *Bengali* people came to Assam for job and settled here. Still the people of Bengal were not acquainted with the ancient history of Assam and more particularly the people of North and East Bengal had a desire to know about the history of ancient *Kamarupa* as it was extended up to these territories. Therefore when the Varendra Research Society was established in 1910 at Rajshahi, the scholars of Assam and North Bengal felt the necessity to establish a research society in the model of Varendra Research Society. The decision was taken at the conference of the *Uttarbanga Sahitya Sanmela*n held at Kamakhya in April, 1912. Thus the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti was established on 7th April, 1912. The Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti, which having collected quite a good number of antiquities, such as old manuscripts, copper plates, sculptures, coins and other historical relics

conceived the idea of establishing a museum which now stands as a symbol of Indian heritage with a rich collection of antiquities and art objects. The immediate contribution of the Samiti was the establishment of the Assam State Museum and the University of Gauhati. The pioneer institution of indological and historical research had inspired to grow similar institutions of high reputation engaged in the field of research.

The present study is intended to show how the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti proved to be a centre of learning inviting various scholars with a commitment to promote research and disseminating knowledge on matters relating to history, archaeology, ethnography, language and literature and allied subjects with emphasis on history and heritage of the area. The foundation of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti evoked an unprecedented enthusiasm and genuine interest among the men of letters, so much so that many eminent literary figures of the time enrolled themselves as members of the Samiti. Besides receiving patronage of highly placed Government officers with an antiquarian bent of mind it attracted the leaders of all antiquarian societies of Eastern India of the time. Thus it had increased the prestige of the Samiti and in no time it got the status of a national institution. The event practically marked the beginning of indological research in this region and investigation in to Assam's ancient past and in course of time the institution secured official patronage from December 18, 1915. These issues are not only important but also deserve attention to construct a history of this institution.

From its inception the Samiti faced financial hardship. Therefore it did not launch any programme independently which would require a good deal of organization and money, but to do as much work as could be done with the help it could expect from the government and the patrons, and be undertaken by its individual members. In spite of its financial hardship the academic programmes of the Samiti did not stop. The research activities of the individual members of the Samiti were published in the Assamese journals of the time namely the *Bahi*, *Chetana*, *Milan*, *Awahan*, *Asam Bandhu* and other local journals like *Asam Bandhav* and more than fifty research articles came out in the pages of these journals. The Samiti brought out its first issue of the journal (Journal of the Assam Research Society) in 1933. From that time onwards it kept on publishing research activities regularly; of course there were occasional lapses. It not only kept its academic programmes active but also inspired establishment of other research centre to boost academic pursuits. The outstanding result was, no doubt, the establishment of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in June, 1928 and the Department of Archaeology, which later on merged with the Director of Museum (i.e. Assam State Museum). By dint of its activities and achievements over the decades the *Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti* has a legitimate claim to be reckoned with as one of the reputed research and academic centre of Assam vis-à-vis India.

Scholars of Assam and beyond have so far made valuable contributions to the history of Assam and their investigations have opened many dimensions of

modern research on Assam. But so far no attempt has been made to write a comprehensive history of the *Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti*, which ever stands as an institution of excellence in terms of highlighting many aspects of Assamese history and culture. Numerous books and journals of the Assam Research Society, have thrown light on various aspects of the history and people of the region. The importance of most of the issues lies in the fact that each of them provides many unknown information on the history and heritage of Kamarupa, vis-à-vis of the *Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti*. It is surprising while the Samiti is about to touch its centenary year and also had the opportunities to celebrate Diamond Jubilee(1973) and Platinum Jubilee in 1993, there is no attention of the scholars to present a chronological or dependable history of the *Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti*.

In fact, in our disposal there are *Centenary volume of Cotton College, Guwahati*, *Centenary volume of Presidency College, Calcutta or the Cloister's Pale*, *A Biography of the University of Bombay* where remarkable steps are found to have been taken to studying the institution of higher learning. As a result, over the years, we have enriched our knowledge with the publications of (a) *The History of the University of Dacca* by M.A. Rahim, (b) *The History of Aligarh Muslim University Vol.I*, by K.A. Nizami (c) *Aligarh Muslim University Perfect Past and Precarious Present* by Anil Mahes & Wari, (d) *A History of Hooghly Mohsin College* (ed) Dr. Basanta Kumar Samanta ,(e) *Hundred Years History of Cotton College, 1901-2001* by U. Bharali, to name a few in our disposal.

Keeping in mind the above trends of research and studies and also the importance of the institution a humble attempt has been made to fill up the gap and present a complete history of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti based on the source materials so far not touched or undertaken for study.

The present study has been taken up with the following chapters.

The first chapter is 'Trends in the regional historical research in colonial India'. It deals with how a trend has been developed in India during the nineteenth century. What prompted the Europeans to study about India's past and how they could inspire the Indians for investigating in to the history of India? The Indian scholars could interpret the view of the Europeans and therefore they made an extensive search on the historical sources to establish that the Indians are the inheritors of the great civilizations. It was partially due to the reawakening or regeneration, which ultimately generated nationalistic feelings and inspired to explore the heritage of Indian tradition. The nationalistic outlook further developed regional importance and throughout India region wise historical research societies were established in order to undertake studies in micro level and to prepare a history of the nation. The inspiration provided by the Asiatic Society of Bengal for the encouragement of the indological studies may also be noted here because the urge for a regional centre in Assam itself was largely due to a direct inspiration from such a glamorous institution patronized and organized mainly by some British intellectuals.

The second chapter titled- 'The idea and origin of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti' deals with the background that a research society in Assam was established in 1912. The initiative taken by the colonial government, the role of the local scholars and those from outside and intellectuals and the opportunity for foundation of such an institution during the first decade of the twentieth century when hardly there were few educated person in Assam with higher education.

'Organization: Growth and development' of the Samiti has been placed under the third chapter with three sub sections to have detail information.

Section I deals with the establishment of the Samiti, in which attempt has been made to show how the institution was established with limited members.. The formation of the first Executive Committee and enrolment of ordinary members, seeking patronage from government officials and inclusion of honorary members for providing guidance to the activities of the Samiti .

Section II deals with the framing of the rules, prospectus and constitution of the Samiti. The rules framed served as the guidelines for the proper functioning of the Samiti.. The rules approved by the General Body served as the constitution in which various clauses were included. However before framing the rules a prospectus of the Samiti was published by the Secretary of the Executive committee to create public awareness about the functioning of the institution and seeking public cooperation on the mission. The rules adopted in 1916 were amended in 1983 with some new addition and adopted as the constitution of the

Samiti. Most of the rules and articles of the constitution bear same meaning except the new addition.

Section III deals with decentralization of powers and functions of the Samiti. This section is divided in to three sub heads: a) deals with membership- the eligibility criteria to be a member, category of members, the privileges and forfeiture of membership, the rate of contributions etc. b) deals with fund procurement for various activities related to research work. The government grants and the contributions of the members were the sources of income. That was not enough to carry out the various activities of the Samiti relating to research activities and to improve the condition c) deals with patronage of the common people and the government. The patronage of the common people and the government helped the Samiti to grow from a regional institution to a national one. The liberal grants of the government were the only recurring income on which the Samiti's survival depended.

The member of the Samiti wrote innumerable articles on the antiquities of Assam. However there was a want of landed aristocracy to come forward with liberal donation.

Fourth chapter is titled 'Activities and Constraints' of the Samiti. The nature of the activities of the Samiti needs good organization with sound financial background. The Samiti developed many innovative ideas, but the crunch of fund hit it.. The financial crisis made the activities of the Samiti defunct at a later period. The growth of similar institution at a later period under the patronage of

the government may be a tentative cause of lacking interest among the public and the government

Fifth chapter titled 'Samiti at its climax' has been divided in to four sub chapters for an in-depth analysis relating to each aspect.

- i) The administrative set up of the Samiti from its inception till our period of study has been discussed based on the available data. The Executive Committee of the Samiti functioning as the governing body of the institution remained unchanged till our period of study.
- ii) The academic pursuits of the Samiti are related to the research in history, archaeology, ethnography and cultural aspects of ancient *Kamarupa* and its adjoining areas. The members of the samiti also brought out some valuable publications through other government agency. The Samiti took the following steps to enhance the academic activities relating to research- a) Research publications. b) Collections of antiquities. c) Publications of books. d) Exploration of historical sites for collection of relics. e) Library services. f) Seminars, lectures.
- iii) The Samiti also provides much information to fill up the gap on the national history through a micro level study. The Museum established by the Samiti stands today as the symbol of Indian heritage. The activities and efforts of the Samiti were able to reckon as a national institution

- iv) The Samiti is the path maker of the allied institutions engaged in the field of research. It also earns a fair reputation as a pioneer academic institution. It was established with the aim of conducting research in to the antiquities of Assam for the reconstruction of the ancient history of Assam. It is the credit of the Samiti, which creates an environment for the organized research movement in Assam and continuing till date in spite of its various limitations

The Chapter-VI, titled - 'The Manifest Destiny- Samiti under strain' deals with the present, past and future of the institution. In the long run of its existence the Samiti has passed the stages of being the sole institution engaged in the field of historical research, then a pioneer institution and presently to an abandoned one. The patronage of public and the government positioned it as a front rank voluntary organization in India and it is the only oldest surviving institution of this kind in the North East. In spite of the hardship faced by the Samiti the missionary zeal of the members and well-wishers has kept the light burning.

The Chapter-VII, is the conclusion part of the dissertation and it is simply the observation of the work and the gaps, if any, that may creep up in course of the investigation.

Trends in the Regional Historical Research in Colonial India

History (the study of man and his wonderful development through the successive ages) can be said to have originated with man himself ¹. The old trend of history for generalization ² on the basis of scanty information of any region has totally changed new. Apart from national history the focus is on region ³. The Oxford Dictionary ⁴ defines region as a continuous part of a surface, space or body; an administrative division of a country. History means investigation. If one combines these two words to understand as a concept then the meaning changes altogether. Regional history can mean investigation of a region or investigation of the administrative division of a country ⁵. Both history as well as region does many factors to form their own identity. This means region constitutes the geography, natural elements and the demography, but also the society and its relation with the environment. The interaction thus forms socio economic and political identities. These identities broadly called cultural units. The World has witnessed from times immemorial the existence of such cultural units, their interaction with one another and also the quest for keeping up their identities and offering requires responses to all challenges. Regional history is thus an important instrument by which it will always be possible for the man to measure the progress made by mankind ⁶. From the broadest sense history of a region is not fundamentally different from that of its contiguous region and not altogether unrelated to the history of a country of which it is

a part. Regional history presents in the perspective of national history and merges in its main currents with methodical vigours and interprets refreshingly in an integrated fusion enables people to see unity in diversity, their affinity with the people of other regions and inspire them to work together with emotional attachment for common betterment which they feel their own⁷.

Local or micro history is another area, which is attracting a large number of historians. It deals with in-depth study of a locality, a village, a small town, a district or any culturally autonomous region. It provides a manageable geographical framework approximated the idea of total history by the study of its parts, illuminates the processes of wider social change of the people and registers responses of reaction of the masses to the politics, program and practices of the central Government of the social economic and political super structure⁸. A deep and intimate study of the ancient Indian culture shows its variegated pattern. Different historical and geographical region, while maintaining the fundamental unity of Indian culture exhibit certain characteristic development. The study of cultural heritage of the various regions of Indian helps us to have a closer understanding and varying intensity of the forces at work in different parts of the country indifferent periods. The justification of study of regional histories lies mainly in serving as an aid to the understanding of the comprehensive history of the ancient land in all its fullness; in its achievements and failures through ages⁹. The interpretation of Indian

history through provincial history on the analogy of the interpretation of world history through national history. In England provincial/regional history is being taught as a parallel or subsidiary study on the lines of the study of local history side by side with national history. Local history does not necessarily mean the history of the town or the village. It comprises the history of the neighborhood with which the individual is familiar or can be made familiar. Even state or region has its own series of important events to record as its history. During nineteenth century the advance of the physical sciences with their scientific methods of investigation brought a new critical attitude to the study of history ¹⁰.

It is likely that the early British and European historians nurtured the Indian historical research in the nineteenth century. But the interest of the *Pax Britannica* was an antithesis to the growth of the regional history or the history of the people in different areas of India. It was but natural for the imperialist historians to develop these aspects of Indian historical studies, which would contribute to the interest of the English in India. As Indian history was approached from the standpoint of ruling authority the entire sub continent was taken as one unit or entity, vis-à-vis the center of power. Hence the emphasis on macro works, and the history of the regions remained a far cry ¹¹. By and large the emphasis was on macro history of India and mainly the problem and policies of the British in India were evaluated in the light of Indian response. Macro histories had their own utility no doubt, but they presented mostly one side at the picture. However

224956



towards the end of the nineteenth century a team of older generation of Indian historians in different parts of India took their cue from their British counterparts and developed the study further. A new trend to study Indian history from a regional angle began to blow since the beginning of the twentieth century. The early writers could Indianise Indian History to some extent but a qualitative change came only, after Indian Independence. Emergence of the regional history in India is a fortunate development in the growth of modern Indian historiography. It was partly a conscious effort of the farsighted scholars and partly a natural development since Independence when the researchers of Indian history were getting fed up with the legacies of British Indian Historiography. A macro history can touch only one surface; but for an intimate knowledge about the people of any area one is expected to look to regional history in its proper form ¹². Thus identifying their various parts in terms of region as a unit of historical research is not as easy as it might seem. Before understanding research in the history of an area taken to be a distinct region it is essential to satisfy ourselves whether it contains all or most of the elements that tend to shape to the making of a region.

When the Indians first began to learn English, little was known to their ancient past, and even they were indifferent as to the importance of comprehensive of India written by James Mill ¹³. Interestingly, James Mills wants to see the same situation what the Englishmen found themselves in eighteenth century Europe¹⁴. The very poor knowledge that the Indian

themselves possessed about their own past history is shown by the history of the Hindu kings written by Mritunjay Vidyalkar, a *Pandit* of the Fort William College in Calcutta in the year 1808. The work of the early oriental scholars like Sir William Jones, Prinsep Bothlink, and other Europeans had not reached or impressed the general public. But the regular archaeological explorations and excavations commencing in 1861 A.D. under the personal supervision of Alexandar Cunningham ¹⁵ and the writings of Max Mueller¹⁶, H.H.Wilson ¹⁷, Ferguson ¹⁸, Rajendra Lal Mitra ¹⁹ and others in a more popular form brought home to the educated Indians a very vivid picture of the past glory and greatness of ancient India which placed her on the same pedestal with Greece and Rome. This inspired the Hindus ²⁰ with a sense of their rich heritage of the past and the role they played as a great in the history of the world. The views promulgated by European scholars that the fore fathers of the Hindus belonged to the same group of human society from which sprang all the nations of Europe who earned fame in ancient and modern times ²¹.

During the colonial administration in India, the British enlightened officers in the midst of their multifarious duties both civil and military, explored ancient sites and after searching enquiries left invaluable accounts of our past heritage. The influence behind the officials of the company as *David Kopf* has shown with deep insight that the company's servant, the more elite among them come from the intellectual-cultural milieu of the eighteenth century European Enlightenment, a fact which goes far to explain

the phenomenal orientalist rediscovery of the Hindu Classical age²². Apart from personal love and wisdom there were at least two references to which the recovery of Indian forgotten past owed its impulses. The first was the company's official needed to know the language and culture of the people committed to their responsibility. Linguistic proficiency was the key to advancement in the company's service, the young indologist²³ got a patron in the Governor General himself²⁴. Urging on the junior officers of the colonial Government to take active part on ethnographic research Sir Edward Gait has made an appeal as:

“I would specially urge junior officers of my own service to take an active part in Ethnographic research. No civilian can be a really successful officer unless he understands the habits and mentality of the people of his district, and nothing will tend to such an understanding more than sustained enquiries regarding their language, manners, customs, rites and superstitions. Such enquiries moreover bring their own reward, for they give an added interest to official tours and develop one's power of observation and mental alertness”²⁵.

When the British imperialism extended their sphere of authority to different parts of the Indian sub continent, they encountered myriad communities that were at various economic and cultural levels ranging from the 'most primitive' hunters gathers to highly stratified cast based societies engaged in primary and secondary production or its organization. During

the early colonial period the educated Indian retained their traditional history in the form of handwritten epics, *Puranas*, and semi-biographical works. Modern research in the history of India began only in the second half of the eighteenth century to serve the needs of the British colonial administration ²⁶. Bengal and Bihar fell under the rule of the East India company in 1765. The East India Company officials found it difficult to administer the Hindu Law of inheritance. Therefore in 1776 the *Manu Smriti* (The Law Book of Manu) which was authoritative, was translated in to English. *Pandits* were associated with the British judges to administer Hindu Civil laws and Maulavis to administer that of Muslims. The initial efforts to understand ancient laws and customs, which continued largely until the eighteenth century, culminated in the establishment in Calcutta in 1784 of the Asiatic Society of Bengal by a civil servant of the east India Company, Sir William Jones ²⁷. He emphasized that originally the European languages were very similar to Sanskrit and the Iranian Language. This enthused European countries such as Germany, France and Russia to foster Indological Studies ²⁸. The greatest impetus to indological studies was given by the German born scholar F. Max Mueller who had mostly passed his life in England. The revolt of 1857 made Britain to realize that it badly needed a deeper knowledge of the manners and social system of an alien people they ruled over. The Christian Missionaries also sought to uncover the vulnerabilities in the Hindu religion to win converts and strengthen the British Empire. To meet this need ancient scriptures were translated on a

massive scale under the editorship of Max Muller. To meet these needs ancient Indian Iranian and Chinese texts were translated which numbered altogether fifty. Among these the Indian texts were predominant. In the introduction to these volumes and books based on them Max Muller and other western scholars made some generalizations about the nature of ancient Indian History and society. Vincent Arthur Smith ²⁹, who wrote in 1904, the first systematic history of ancient India, made many of these generalizations in the *Early History of India*.

The colonial government constructed the histories of the colonies based on the available sources and interpreted the evidence to suit colonial rule. The most common generalization in their writings pertained to the depiction of the societies of the colonized world as essentially backward and stagnant before the advent of the colonized rule and the resultant introduction of modern elements of material life, law and order- among the other things- to change those societies for the better ³⁰. As a whole British interpretations of Indian history served to denigrate the Indian character and achievement and justify colonial rule. The ideas behind such generalizations were to establish the fact that Indians were incapable of governing themselves ³¹. Naturally it was a great challenge to the Indian scholars particularly who had received western education. They were upset by the colonialist distortions of their past history and at the same time distressed by the contrast between the decaying feudal society of India and that of the progressive capitalists of Britain. An urge began to develop among the

educated Indians to make India more Indian than British. This class did not want western civilization to displace their own as Macaulay³² that the missionaries had wanted. The task that the first generation of modern Indian historians had to perform was to defend their culture and civilization against the notions of British towards India and the Indians. In doing so most historians were guided by the nationalist ideas of Hindu revivalism, but there were no dearth of scholars who adopted a rationalist and objective approach. To the second category belongs Rajendra Lal Mitra who published some Vedic texts and wrote a book entitled *Indo Aryan*. In Maharashtra R.G Bhandarkar³³ and V.K. Rajwade³⁴ emerged as two great-dedicated scholars who pieced together varied sources to reconstruct the social and political history of India. R.G. Bhandarkar too reconstructed the political history of the *Satavahanas* of the Deccan and the history of *Vaishnavism* and other sects.

Thus it may be noted that the initial interest for regional history in India grew up with a nationalist viewpoint. It was also motivated to some extent by a search for new source materials, a search which resulted in the exploration and study of the source materials in the form of epigraphy, numismatics, historical and religious literature, archival records and even family papers- all of which added to the body of information available on the history of many regions of the sub continent³⁵. The historical interest in the regions such as South India, Bengal and Maharashtra not only opened a new era of historical research but also proved to be an incentive to look at

the regional history in various dimensions. The spirit of nationalism in various states boosted up the interest of regional history and the historians of the respective region had their positive response in this regard.. In contemporary historical writing, there is a tendency of equating the present state boundary as boundary of the region holding it viable for all period of history, Secondly certain theories current in earlier historical writings are believed to be almost automatic are endorsed even for regional history. Thirdly there is a search for a golden age, though it always remained subjective. Research in regional history, debates on historical assumptions at national level for an analysis of the historical pattern of the region to discover its intrinsic value, i.e. 'India for ourselves'. It tried to release these patterns to the generalizations of Indian History, which helped the generalizations to be made at wider level.

Keeping in mind the perception the statement of Romila Thapar may be cited here. She says- we should care to know at what point of time the region got its identity as a region and is having a history. Then we should consider the geographical boundary of the region. We have to notice also when the larger frontiers coincides and sub regions starts interaction and relationship with each other which form a major part of historical research. We need to deeply deliberate over the data available to us to study the prosperity, migrations, invasions, trade routes, technology and religion affecting the importance or decay of a region³⁶. She has also given examples about the history of Maharashtra which is equated with the rise

of the Maratha kingdom and also Rajasthan which is related with the with the emergence of Mewar and Marawar.³⁷ These are however, not isolated phenomenon of Indian history related a historical matrix embodied as limits of Indian national history. In this respect Romila Thapar further reasons that a valuable offshoot of nationalist historiography was a growth of interest in regional and local history³⁸. This in turn led to the discovery of new source materials in local history repositories and to greater archaeological work in the region. The result of such studies filled many lacunae in historical knowledge and acted as a corrective to some of the earlier generalizations. Evidence of regional variations in the cultural pattern led to recognition that it was unwise and unhistorical to generalize about the entire Indian subcontinent on the basis of the Ganges heartland. Histories of smaller geographical areas such as Bengal and Maharashtra became common. Nilkanta Sastri's³⁹ works have brought the history of south India in to national perspectives.

Regional history can thus be taken as a smaller part of National history, which is also a smaller slice of the World history. In spite of the fact that such a study of regional history may be desirable and useful it is more likely to prove harmful⁴⁰. Whichever way on is to make a cut or division one have to remember that it is a cut that one is dealing with a part of an organic whole which has no separate existence in reality. India presents a special problem in the matter of grading history. She is a world in herself⁴¹. Her provinces are as big as some European countries. Many of

them have their own history that is partly provincial and partly Indian in character. It will be very much difficult to adjust of Indian history and the provincial histories of say Maharashtra, Gujrat, Karnataka, Bengal and Assam.

Various schools have investigated Indian History viz. Imperialist, Nationalist, Marxist, Subaltern and so on. In their conventional form of interpretation all these schools have tried to interrogate and investigate historical documents from different perspectives and the regional history has also been focused according to their respective style and ideology. The painstaking efforts of these schools have produced political, economic, social, cultural and many other dimensions of the regional aspect. In other words these schools have contributed indirectly to the development of regional histories and their importance in India. Early attempt at regional history were motivated primarily to locate new materials. This search has resulted in an abundance of sources, archaeological, epigraphic, historical and religious literatures, archival records and family papers all of which have added to the body of information available on the history of many regions of the sub continent ⁴². During the time of the growth and spread of nationalism in India national leaders as well as other professional and non professional historians took interest in local incidents and tried to link up the current that prevailed between the regional and national issues of the then India. These incidents sometime had brought them to the mainstream politics and also legitimized their aspirations to acquaint an identity with

the past. If we look back upon the status of historiography before the nineteenth century we find three different channels of communications for the expression of historical interest. There was instruction in history at the Universities, usually in a subordinated auxiliary form, there were great research enterprises producing publications of source materials, and there were historical literatures composed by *littérateurs cum statesman* ⁴³.

Discovery of the past is a salient feature of Indian Renaissance ⁴⁴, which is also, described by some historian as reawakening or regeneration of the Indian society. The archaeological excavations and researches of both Europeans and Indians revealed India's glorious past and created national consciousness in the minds of the Indians. The revived interest in ancient learning heightened esteem for pagan culture in all its phases and the result was an unparalleled and many and many many-sided development of art architecture, sculpture, music, painting and engraving. During the colonial administration in India under the patronage of the government the officials took interest in recovering the ancient sites and archaeological evidences. Many individuals, who contributed enormously, included James Ferguson who carried out extensive surveys of the rock cut monuments in India discovering the *Dhauri* rock edict and his surveys in Gaya and Sarnath. Edward Thomas in the field of numismatics, Cunningham who help Prinsep in the investigations on the Indo Greek and Indo Sythic dynasties and also explored Stupas in *Bhilsa* etc. Walter Elliot who followed the work of Collin Mackenzie and copied nearly 595 inscriptions from Dharwar, Sonda

and North Mysore also reconstructed dynasties through coin; Colonel Meadows Taylor who carried out extensive surveys on the megalithic monuments of south India. Dr. Stevenson and Dr. Bhau Dain carried out surveys on the megalithic monuments of south India.. These bands of scholar administrators had to labor under various disadvantages. That was a time when communication and means of conveyance was still in the medieval stage, when printed books on indological studies were very rare, the science of photography was quite underdeveloped and archaeological sciences like epigraphy, numismatics, iconography and architecture were in their infancy ⁴⁵.

While others were thinking in terms of individual study and research, Sir William Jones was the first man to think in terms of a permanent institution for oriental studies and researches on a grand scale in this country. With this dream the Asiatic Society was established on the 15th January 1784. He worked with a dream and visualized as a center for Asian Studies including almost everything concerning human society and ecology that governs the life condition of men. He felt, to quote in his own language “that in the fluctuating, imperfect and cemented erudition of life, such enquiries and improvements could only be made by the united efforts many who are not easily brought without some pressing inducements and strong impulse to converge in a common form”⁴⁶. In the term of the original resolution, the object of the society was “enquiry in to the history and antiquities arts, science and literatures of Asia” ⁴⁷. The bounds of

investigations will be the geographical limits of Asia, and within these limits its enquiries will be extended to whatever is performed by men or produced by nature” and this sentence is serving as the motto of the society⁴⁸. Following the objective of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and being inspired by its activities a number of voluntary institutions of antiquarian grew up in different parts of India for investigating in to the study of regional or local History⁴⁹. The primary aims of these academic societies were mainly to discover the history, heritage and culture of the region/locality and for dissemination of those findings through publications. At the same time it provided opportunities for the antiquarians to find out new sources for extension of their area of research. Generally the researches are carried out under the auspices of the universities but the number of Universities in India till the last decade of the nineteenth century was very less which could not cater the needs. A new awakening marked the close of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. It may be viewed as a part of the great national awakening throughout India which had found expression in the formation of national level organization like Indian National Congress in 1885 under the inspiration of a British official⁵⁰. Each region or state, or state having a rich cultural heritage tried to give an exposure of its glorious past. However this attempt was restricted within the locality due to absence of well-accepted and popular national language. Therefore the outlook of the national history differs from that of regional history. If one has to choose one single factor, which helped more than

others in bringing about the great transformation in India in the nineteenth century, one can without any hesitation point out to the introduction of English language ⁵¹. The introduction of English education in the nineteenth century broke the isolation among the regions and a common language helped the scholars to recover the history and culture and to take interest in enquiring the history of different regions. Under the able leadership of Sir William Jones, allied institutions like Archaeological Survey of India started its functions for excavation and exploration on historical sites throughout India under the Royal patronage. Attention was also made to reconstruct history, which had been accomplished in previous centuries. But the men and the organizations that had undertaken these no longer existed. The only agent large enough and strong enough to reassume the task of the previous centuries was the Government ⁵².

When the Asiatic Society was formed there were no Indian representations. The native elites consider it to be a leisure time activity of the British officers. Moreover the Indian feel themselves too inferior in front of the British Administrators. But when the history of India was gradually unfolded through archaeology, epigraphy and other field of scholarship; an image of the united Indian nation emerged which pictured them as one of the great historic peoples of the world who had contributed to the growth of civilization. That history where not only bore witness to a continuing civilization in India with its achievements in many fields, religion, literature, philosophy art, architecture etc. to which every part of

India had an equal right but to a glorious tradition of cultural expansion overseas and across deserts which founded cities, states and empires and actively carried on an international life in the not remote past, created in the minds of the people pride of Indians. Without this new self-image the political unity of India would have been artificial⁵³. European scholars like Max Mueller, Monier William Ruth, Burnout, Jacobe and Colebrooke⁵⁴ helped the educated Indians to rediscover their own culture and civilization and the world to know the secret of India's great cultural heritage. They held Indian civilization and culture superior and thereby kindled in the bosom of Indians the fire of patriotism which was put aflame by Indian scholars like M.G. Ranade⁵⁵, Raja Rajendra Lal Mitra, Hara Prasad Sastri and Pandu Sen.

Regular research work on Indian history had started from the second half of the nineteenth century and considerable progress had been made during the last century. A lot of source materials are available in different Indian and foreign languages are well preserved in different parts of the country but no serious attempt has been made so far for collection and interpretation of it. India is a vast country and a land of diversity- ethnological, cultural, religious, regional and linguistic. For a proper study and reconstruction of Indian history a central or all India approach will be quite useless and superficial. The basic approach should be regional, at least from the point of view of the source material available. Indian society is not monolithic; in the same sense as many other societies in the world. In the

broadest sense India is one country and India have many things in common. But it would be quite unrealistic for a historian to ignore the regional diversities. So far as India is concerned, national history can be reconstructed only through a regional approach on the basis of regional diversities ⁵⁶. It was with the indological quest that modern method of historical research and reconstruction- then spreading in Europe- was introduced in India. The Asiatic Society of Bengal, which William Jones had consciously modeled on the Royal Society in London, ushered in the age of scientific and specialized study in Indian history and culture.

At the beginning of twentieth century India consisted of fifteen provinces variously designated as Presidencies under the Lieutenant Governor and the Chief Commissioner. Bombay, Madras and Bengal were the three Presidencies. Bihar and Orissa, Burma, the Punjab and the united provinces were under four Lieutenant Governors; and Ajmeer, Mewar, the Andamans, Assam, Beluchistan, Central provinces, Coorg, Delhi and North West Frontier Provinces formed the eight presidencies ruled by the Chief Commissioners. Any rational and or scientific planning did not form these heterogeneous units that comprised British India. These developments resulted the rise of some regional identities that dominated and still are dominating the history culture and temperament of the people of India. In Indian perspective the same trend started by colonial government. Keeping in view the regional varieties in terms of culture, demography topography

and aspiration of the people, the colonial government paid attention to record historical past of the respective region.

The greatest impetus to indological studies was given by the German born scholar F. Max Mueller (1823-1902) who was largely based in England. The Revolt of 1857 caused Britain to realize that it badly needed a deeper knowledge of the manners and social system of an alien people called the Indians over whom it ruled. By the year 1857 the Colonial Government established Universities in the three presidencies for the purpose of higher education and research. But that was not much beneficial for the common men who remained outside the catchments of the universities. In order to draw the attention of the Indians for historical enquiry they further established such scholarly societies at their own interest and at the same time invited the Indian to take part in it. Historical interest began to seep from political history that is from individual rulers and activities of states, down to larger and larger numbers of ordinary people. We have already referred the contributions of William Jones in the field of indological research. After William Jones, indological studies and research took a new turn, which had two distinct directions: ⁵⁷. The first was the critical study of ancient Indian documents and the second archaeological discovery and study of old inscriptions, coins, and monuments. Literatures alone cannot discover the ancient past. The contributions of James Prinsep ⁵⁸ towards deciphering Ashokan Brahmi Script, Charles Wilkins ⁵⁹ use of inscriptions to reconstruct the history of the Palas of Bengal and Alexander

Cunningham's excavations at Sarnath practically opened a new chapter and aspirations for the study of regional history. Till the later part of nineteenth century, historical sites and monuments were not under protection. Lord Curzon in 1904 passed the "Ancient Monument Protection Act" which becomes another milestone for the preservation of historical monuments of India. He established archaeological department to take care of the antiquities with the support of the government of India ⁶⁰. Thus it may be noted that with the beginning of twentieth century archaeological excavations side by side of the policy of protection of the archaeological sites became a part of historical research. The Government of India had an instruction, which runs as:

"The government officers are required to report the discovery of objects of archaeological interest and it was obligatory on the part of the Government officers to interpret the report for his knowledge and not merely to the case of those in which he had a personal share" ⁶¹.

All the Chief Secretary of the states was instructed to implement the order. Thus the British colonial government encouraged historical enquiry and researches in all the provinces. Funds were provided to carryout such activities. It may be true that their main interest was to run the administration in an orderly manner but at the same time one must agree that a trend was developed for regional historical research under the patronage of the colonial administration. The Indians themselves also made

by the end of the nineteenth century, a beginning in writing the history of their country. Scholars like Bhagawanlal Indraji ⁶², Bhau Dhaji and Rajendra Lal Mitra in exploring and editing the core material for Indian history had done valuable work ⁶³. The British imperialist historian as well as the Indian nationalist historians recorded the historical events mainly on political and biographical in nature. But the trend of regional history was that it was not covering entire activities of the men and nature of the past. The regional history was constructed mainly on sources available within and outside of the region. However there is a clear picture that the trend of regional history was to develop chronology and as such dynastic history developed in different regions to fill up the gap of earlier chronology. No pain was taken either to study the socio-cultural and economic developments.

India is a land of diversity, culturally, racially, linguistically, topographically, and ethnologically these diversities existed throughout the country. On sixth-seventh centuries, there began the formation of units or groups which later on come to be known as Karnataka, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu etc. The identity of different cultural groups is recognized both Indian and Foreign documents. The Chinese traveler *Hsuan Tsang* mentions several nationalities and likewise the Jaina texts of late eighth century noticed the existence of eighteen major peoples or nationalities and describe the physical features of at least sixteen of them ⁶⁴.

Vishakhadatta, an author of the ninth century speaks of different regions inhabited by peoples different in customs, clothing, and language ⁶⁵.

A remarkable development takes place in the linguistic history of India since seventh century, the birth of *Apabhramsha* ⁶⁶, and the final stage of the middle Indo-Aryan. This language is placed roughly halfway between *Prakrit* the preceded it and modern Indo-Aryan languages that succeeded it. Roughly it covers the period from 600-1000 A.D. extensive *Jaina* literature was written in this language towards the end of this period. Glimpses of modern languages are traceable in both *Jaina* and *Buddhist* writings in *apabhramsha*. *Buddhist* writings from Eastern India show faint glimmerings of Bengali, Assamese, Maithili, Oria and Hindi. Similarly the *Jaina* works of the same period reveal the beginnings of Gujrati and Rajasthani. In south, Tamil was the oldest language, but Kannada began to grow at about this time, Telegu and Malayam developed much later. Each region came to develop its own language because of its isolation from the other. When the Gupta Empire broke up, several independent principalities rose and this naturally hindered countrywide contacts and communication. The decline of trade meant lack of communication between people of the various regions and this promoted the growth of regional Language. The growth of cultural units and regional languages promote the concept of regional identity among the peoples of India.

This separate identity that is required to be explored and it is the task of regional history to record such events based on the reliable sources. The

regional language played a vital role for the development of local and regional histories. Each region or state having a rich cultural heritage tried to give an exposure of its own. However their attempt was confined within that region until the development of a language that is known to the Indian as well as the British. The regional language-Tamil, Telegu, Kannada and Marathi were fully accepted and mature. Although most of the literature in these languages excluding Tamil consisted of adoptions from Sanskrit original particularly the Epics and the *Puranas*. As was the case in northern India, Sanskrit remains the language of learning in certain sections of society. While the British administration wants to gather information for successful administration on the societies they had to govern for a fair understanding of the Indian- their way of life and history. The British officers appointed on different parts of the country made attempts to study the history heritage and culture of the society to make themselves acquainted with the pattern of administration. They also tried to learn the language to become friendlier with the natives. Unless they adopted such policies they would have remain as stranger. While doing so important discoveries came to light and such discoveries open new route for further investigation and research.

Another aspect of regional history is the recovery of the Oral history. In India there are some hill tribes ⁶⁷ who do not have their own scripts, but they are having their tradition. This type of tradition is handed over from generation to generation and may supply huge information for regional

history of the respective area. It is likely that one of the major tasks of the regional historians to organize the documents and bring out history of the people concerned

A notable point on the initiative and the encouragement of regional historical research society was that the colonial government to exercise its activity under the control of the government patronized it. Though the organization was voluntary by nature, the membership was confined within the government officials, teachers, advocates and other professional who were loyal to the British government. More over the colonial government did not allow the persons to be associated with such organization who were either imprisoned or accused for crimes. By doing so the colonial government could earn their supremacy on the Indian Intelligentsia. Therefore at the initial stage of its formation when the spirit of nationalism was at its peak its membership were limited to a handful of local scholars who unconditionally accepted the British supremacy. In this respect Romila Thapar remarks- "The glorious past was also a compensation for the humiliating present" ⁶⁸. The persons associated with the regional historical research movements were basically the Orientalist, the Anglisists did not take much initiative on it.

After the Asiatic Society, the first indigenous research society formed at Calcutta on 23rd July 1893 named as Bengal Academy of Literature. It was initially the attempt of the Bengali intellectuals who met at the Sobhabazar residence of Binay Krishna Deb. Study of Bengali

Literature and the publication of the results of that study with a view to popularizing the literature of Bengal was its primary aim, yet almost every function of the society was performed in English. The first president of the academy was Kumar Bijay Krishna Dev. The other distinguished members of the academy were George Birdwood ⁶⁹(India Office London), Professor Max Mueller, Sir Monier William ⁷⁰, Dr. Litener, Sir Edward Arnold and Sir William Wilson Hunter. Though the society was formed for the study and development of Bengali language at the same time it also emphasized the recovery of the Bengal's history and culture through collection of inscriptions and other records. The contemporary Bengali intellectuals ⁷¹ put in the advices given by Professor Max Mueller and others for the purpose to practice in course of time. In the year 1894 the academy was renamed as the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat*. The first president of the Parishat was Romeshchandra Dutt and the first joint secretaries were L. Leotard and Devendranath Mukhopadhyaya ⁷². The efforts of the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* towards reconstruction of the ancient history of Bengal were quite evident from the papers published through its mouthpiece ⁷³.

The success of the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* inspired its members to establish its branches outside Calcutta in a special meeting held in 1905. Accordingly a branch was immediately established at Rangpoor. Though the branch was named as *Rangpur Sahitya Parishat* it was mainly patronized by the elites , landlords and intellectuals of *Uttarbanga* . Maharaja Nripendra Narayan, the Koch king of North Bengal donated Rs.

500/- and became its first patron and life member. After his death Raja Rajendra Narayan became a patron and donated Rs. 500/-⁷⁴. The primary object of the *Rangpur Sahitya Parishat* is said to be concerned with “the archaeological discoveries in North Bengal and Assam”⁷⁵. In the later stage number of similar organizations grew up for the reconstruction of the history and culture of their own locality with enthusiasm. However it may be said without any hesitation that as the first organizational effort at the reconstruction of the past of Bengal the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* was definitely the inspiration behind the establishment and organization of later local organizations. As mentioned, *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* encouraged the intellectuals of entire region to come forward for the reconstruction of the history and culture of their own locality with enthusiasm. But there was another side of the shield . The aggressive mentality of the members of the *Parishat* and the attempts at the centralization of the whole process created a kind of resentment among the members of the society belonging various localities distant from Calcutta. It seems that the intellectuals of the mufasil township of Bengal did not like Calcutta centrism. Mention may be made of the *Radh Anusandhan Samiti* and *Birbhum Sahitya Parisad* (1400 B.S.). Due to some differences of opinion with the authorities of the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* the *Maharaja* of Hetampur proposed the establishment of the *Radh Anusandhan Samiti* and patronizes its activities. Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprasad Sastri, M.A., C.I.E was its founder President ⁷⁶. The *Birbhum Sahitya Parisad* was established at the initiative

of some intellectuals of Birbhum like Nilaratan Sen, Sibran Mitra and Kuladaranjan Mallick etc. who were also intimately associated with the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat*. Later on *Birbhum Sahitya Parisad* extended its activities as *Birbhumi Anusandhan Samiti*. Babu Nagendranath Vasu, Prachyavidyamaharnava, Sidhantavaridhi, M.R.A.S was its president ⁷⁷.

The Calcutta Historical Society was established on 1907 at the initiative of Hon. Sir Francis Maclean, K.C.I.E, Chief Justice of Bengal Presidency. The objective of the society was “preservation of Indian monuments and in the historical memories of Calcutta”. Only few Indian gentlemen responded to the initiative of the British but they were not disappointed. The president said “What we shall try to do when we settle down to business is to find out some Indian gentlemen and ask them to serve on the council”. Raja Binay Krishna Deb was one of the Vice presidents of the society ⁷⁸. In May 1909, a few European and Indian residents in Bangalore formed the Mythic society. The basic aim of the society was however directed for the ‘encouragement of study in history, ethnology and religions in southern India and stimulation of research in these allied subjects’. Its founder President and vice president were the Hon’ble Mr. S.M. Frasher, I.C.S and the Rev. A.M. Tabard, M.A respectively ⁷⁹.

We have already referred that the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* inspired to establish its branches outside Calcutta. Accordingly another branch of the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* was established at Rajshahi. Famous littérateur of

the locality Sasadhar Roy was elected honorary secretary of the Rajshahi branch. Scholars like Akshay Kumar Maitreya, Ramaprasad Chanda and Kumar Sarat Kumar Ray were associated with the activities of the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* at the early and later stages. The third annual conference of the *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* held at Bhagalpur. Akshay Kumar Maitreya, Ramaprasad Chanda and Sarat Kumar Ray attended the session. After the session they visited the archaeological treasures of Nathnagar (ancient Karnagarh). Sarat Kumar Ray became very enthusiastic about the archaeological treasures. Akshay Kumar Maitreya took the opportunity to impress upon him the richness of antiquarian remains and wealth of sculptural relics in the land of his birth, viz. the ancient tract of Varendra (northern eastern Bengal). Ramaprasad Chanda had shown him the description of the *Deopara Prasasti* collected from Deopara in the Rajshahi district. Being acquainted with the archaeological treasure of his own district Sarat Kumar Ray became more delighted and it was decided that after returning back to Rajshahi, they would undertake an exploratory tour in the district of Rajshahi.

Accordingly the first exploratory tour was undertaken in the month of April 1910. Akshay Kumar Maitreya, Ramaprasad Chanda and Sarat Kumar Ray traveled to the Godagari region of the Rajshahi district. Rakhaldas Bandopadhyay of the Archaeological Survey of India and Rajkamal Singha of *Bangiya Sahitya Parishat* joined them at their request. They explored various sites and were able to collect thirty-two pieces of

sculptures including the life size image of the *Chandi* from Mandail. The entire expenditure of the exploration was borne by Sarat Kumar Roy, Kumar of the Dighapatia *Zamindari* and the collection was kept at his disposal which was subsequently preserved at Rajshahi to create public interest.

The second exploratory tour was undertaken in June 1910 to Khajanpur in the Bogra district. The party consists of Sarat Kumar Ray, Akshay Kumar Maitreya, Ramaprasad Chanda and Rajendralal Acharya, then in charge of the Khajanpur *Khasmahal*. It was at Khajanpur that the idea of organizing in to a research society occurred to them and Sarat Kumar Roy was called President, Akshay Kumar Maitreya, Director and Ramaprasad Chanda as Honorary Secretary ⁸⁰. Thus the idea of establishment of a research society was germinated which was formally inaugurated on 27th September, 1910 and named as Varendra Research Society. The Collection of the relics came to be known as the Varendra Research Museum.

With the coming of the British to Assam a new trend was set in history writing and historical research. It was necessary on the part of the British administration to collect information about the newly acquired territory for their successful administration and its sustenance. Most of the British officers were not professional historians; but basically administrative or military officers. But their sound knowledge of the region and its people proved invaluable for compilation of a number of valuable

historical works. J.P. Wade ⁸¹ made the beginning. The other contributors were Francis Hamilton ⁸², Adam White ⁸³, R.B. Pemberton ⁸⁴, Montgomery Martin ⁸⁵ and John M.Cosh ⁸⁶, William Robinson ⁸⁷, John Butler, William Hunter, E.T.Dalton, T.Fisher and L.W. Shakespeare ⁸⁸. Authentic reports or accounts, mostly based on personal knowledge and experience and compiled by officers like J.B. Neufville, R.Wilcox, S.F. Hannay, C.A. Bruce, T. Hugar, G.Dunbar and Francis Jenkins were published in the Asiatic Researches and the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

The adventures of Jean-Baptiste Chevalier ⁸⁹ in Eastern India (1752-1765) is a work that was shrouded in mystery from the time it was written until it was read, restored and published by Jean Deloche ⁹⁰ through the French School of Asian Studies (EFEO) ⁹¹, Paris in 1984. However being in French, it was largely remained obscure from those scholars and researchers whose first or second language is English. Recently Caroline Dutta-Baruah ⁹² has translated the work in English, which throws new light on the topography and history of ancient Assam ⁹³.

Recent researches on North East India shows that there were two main trends of historiography that developed in course of time. The first trend tends to accept colonialism as a given phenomenon and therefore there was no questioning of colonialism. Most of the works in this trend only described how colonialism developed and these descriptions were based mainly on official colonial sources. The second trend by and large, believes in justifying colonialism, and which therefore falls in imperialist

historiography⁹⁴. North East also was subject to the similar pattern of historical writings. Both the type of colonial historiography mentioned above has been followed here, although the first category comprising British colonial, the Indian colonial historiography is more prevalent.

British Ethnographers were basically the Administrative or Military officials, missionaries or the odd travelers, began to process of enquiring in to the life pattern and social evolution in this region. Their contributions were turned out to be valuable sources of information. But one may keep in mind the fact that these writings whether those are of P.R.T. Gurdon or A.Playfair or N.E.Parry or J.Shakespear⁹⁵ are mainly the reflection consciously or unconsciously, the political and ideological interest of the British. The purpose of these surveys and the recording of facts were evidently administrative with a view to collecting material and writing about the condition of the people. However once Assam was constituted as a division of Bengal in 1826, compilation of records on the diverse aspects of Assam was actively pursued under the auspices of the British Government.

In the work done by the government to encourage historical studies in Assam, Sir Edward Gait always deserves special mention. It was in his suggestion that the first attempt to conduct an investigation in to the history of Assam through the creation of an official institution was made. The Department of Ethnography was established in 1894 with Gait as its Honorary Director⁹⁶. Through the office of Gait the facsimiles of various

inscriptions of Assam⁹⁷ were being taken to the Asiatic Society of Bengal where these were deciphered and discussed by the well-known epigraphist Hornle. Incidentally in 1898-99 five plates which are known as the Assam Plates of Vallabhdeva (1185 A.D.) were edited and published by another distinguished European epigraphist, F. Kielhorn⁹⁸.

In this regard two facts need to be noted. First by the end of the nineteenth century interest in the historical background of Assam had assumed significant dimension. In this trend Gait published his *Progress of Historical Research in Assam* in 1897, which contains a very comprehensive catalogue of all the published materials on Assam⁹⁹. Secondly it could establish a historical link of Assam history ranging from ninth to thirteenth century. These were virtually based on epigraphy, literary documents and a few other materials found in various parts of Assam. Scholars were able to construct the genealogies of two pre Ahom dynasties¹⁰⁰. Gait in his pioneering work *A History of Assam* (First published in 1905) made extensive use of the inscriptions in reconstructing the pre-Ahom history of the region, but his perspectives was mainly political, as a result of which his treatment of the non political data which could be gleaned from the inscriptions was inadequate. It may, however be noted that Gait's work has given an indication of the extension by the historians of Assam of their field of interest to include a serious study of the ancient period of Assam.¹⁰¹

In the non-official sphere, it is known that the second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the growth of nationalism and popular consciousness among the people. As a corollary, pride in India's ancient past came to be increasingly felt and expressed. The contributions of the Christian missionaries created intellectual awakening. The earliest tradition of historical ideology that influenced the historians of this region was that of the British imperialism and Edward Gait picked up this tradition. Although Gait followed the model of imperialist historiography in the study of the pre Ahom Brahmaputra valley the trend did not get much academic response because the works which were written after the first few decades of the twentieth century, were characterized with nationalistic ideology and the main focus was on the heritage of the people and also to glorify the Indian culture. Kanak Lal Barua's *Early History of Kamarupa*¹⁰² may be taken as a glaring example of such a historical research on history of Assam. These were however works, which focused entirely on pre Ahom Assam with the then available literary and epigraphic sources and the few archeological finds which were available at that time. The focus was mainly on dynastic history and the perception of history and the methods and techniques used in writing did not equip the historians to handle social and economic issues¹⁰³. Although the regional historical research movement in Assam was the out come of nationalistic ideology based on glorification of the past at the same time it unconditionally accepted the supremacy of the colonial government. The main trend of history writing in the pre-1947

periods and years that closely followed were heavily influenced by western liberal ideas of empiricism and documentation with very little attempts at critical interpretative analysis. The works of this pioneers are however valuable because they have brought to light many hitherto unknown and underdeveloped source materials. The gathering of empirical data is important for every researcher and historian for the development of further interpretative work. This group of intellectuals was the creation of the British government from the beginning of their administration in Assam, who rendered services under British Government. As a result the person with anti colonial attitude was not liked by the colonial administration to join such endeavor though he might have interest in it. Members of the society were loyal to the Government and they were mostly government servants like subordinate administrative officers, teachers, advocates, mauzadar, mandals etc ¹⁰⁴. Thus the colonial government could persuade a section of Assamese intellectuals not to raise voice against the British Government

The historical awareness among certain sections (western educated) of peoples of Assam was created through different journals and newspapers ¹⁰⁵ and Societies ¹⁰⁶. However their main interest was confined on the issue of Assamese language and literature.

One individual whose contribution was immense in these un official circles was Mahamahopadhyaya Padmanath Bhattacharya, Vidyavinod, a senior professor of Sanskrit of Cotton College Guwahati. By this time

historical research already became popular in neighbouring Bengal after the formation of *Varendra Anusandhan Samiti* established at Rajshahi on 27 September, 1910. Assam and particularly North Bengal has a similarity of language, culture and history as earlier it was a part of ancient *Pragjyotisa-Kamarupa* and Bengal was a seat of learning for the Assamese. With this in mind, in 1908, the *Banga Sahityaanusilani Sabha* was established in Gauhati ¹⁰⁷. The Sabha could draw the attention of the European officers interested in historical pursuits and could also enlist the co-operation of local scholars like Mahamahopadhyaya Dhireswar Bhattacharyya Kaviratna ¹⁰⁸ Pandit Hemchandra Goswami¹⁰⁹. This *sabha* in course of time was transformed in to the Gauhati Branch of Bengali Literary Association. In 1911 the Kamakhya Session of the North Bengal Literary Society, on the suggestion of Padmanath Bhattacharyya, decided to establish the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti to investigate the antiquities of Assam ¹¹⁰. The Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti was thus founded on 7 April, 1912 with twelve members with its headquarter at Gauhati¹¹¹.

Notes and References

1. Kochar.S.K., *Teaching of History*, first edition, Sterling Publisher, New Delhi, 1971,p.1
2. The blanket application of certain ideas and assumptions to events and developments in history, without much room for specific or localized considerations.
3. Momin. M, Generalization in constructing the histories of North East India, *Proceedings of North east India History Association*, vol.xxiv, Shillong,2003, pp.32-42.
4. See *The oxford English Dictionary*, second Edition, vol. xiii, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991, p.510
5. Shah Kirit.K and Sangle Meharjyoti, *Historiography, Past and Present*, first edition, Rawat publications, Delhi, 2005,p.166
6. Ibid.
7. Gupta Hiralal, Role of regional history in national Integration, paper presented at national seminar at KAS, Guwahati, 1973
8. Bajaj Satish.K, *Recent Trend in Historiography*, Anmol publications, New Delhi, reprint 2001, p.18
9. Verma .B.S., *Socio Religious Economic and Literary condition of Bihar*, Munshi ram Manohar Lal, Delhi, 1962 , preface.
10. Ghate. V.D., *Teaching of History*, Oxford University press, 1940, p.3

11. Banerjee Tarasankar, Presidential Address, *PNEIHA*, Shillong, 1993, p.2
12. Ibid. pp.2-5
13. James Mill, an official of the East India Company in London was an Imperialist historian. He wrote first important history of India 'History' and it was published in 1818.
14. Mazumdar. R.C., *British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*, part II, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay, 1965, p.338
15. Alexander Cunningham (1814-1894) joined the engineering wing of Bengal Army in 1833. He came to India at the age of nineteen years. He is famous as the creator of Indian Archaeological Survey.
16. Max Mueller(1823-1900), a German orientalist and language scholar settled at Oxford, acquired a mastery over Sanskrit without the help of a teacher. He edited the whole text of *RigVeda*.
17. Horace Hayman Wilson (26th September 1786- 8th May 1860) was an English orientalist and served under British east India Company as assistant Surgeon, but his knowledge on metallurgy caused him to be attached to the Mint at Calcutta. Later on he was appointed secretary to the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1811.
18. James Ferguson (1710-1776) was a Scottish astronomer and instrument maker. He contributed various papers for the Royal Society of London.

19. Born in 1823-24 in a respectable Kayastha family at Soora. He was the third son of Janmejaya Mitra. He was the first Bengali to know and cultivate with distinction the newly emerging science of archaeology.
20. Derived from the Sanskrit term *Sindhu*. The Iranian inscriptions first mention Hindu as a district on the Indus. Therefore; in the earlier stage the term Hindu means a territorial unit. It neither indicates a religion nor a community.
21. Mazumdar. R.C., op.cit. p.466
22. Sreedharan.E., *A Text book of Historiography 500 B.C to A.D. 2000*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 2004, p.388
23. Scholar who is devoted to the scientific study of data relating to Indian history and culture, a study in which little emphasis is laid on the political aspects.
24. Governor General Warren Hastings was a patron of Indology. He encouraged the Indologists, fought for them in the Supreme Council and held long discussions with them.
25. Annual Presidential Report, *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, vol.II part.I, Patna, 1917, p.13
26. Sarma. R.S. *India's Ancient Past*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005, p.6

27. Born in 1746, at the age of seventeen he went to Oxford to study Arabic. Arabic drew him to Persian. He also studied law and in 1783 appointed a judge of the Supreme Court at Calcutta.
28. Reconstructing the lost history of India based on the information obtainable from literature and different kinds of archaeological finds like inscriptions, coins, monuments and sculpture.
29. Born in 1848 in Dublin. His father was a doctor as well as a numismatist and archaeologist. He joined Indian civil service in 1869 and served in Uttar Pradesh.
30. Momin. M., op.cit. p.37
31. Sarma.R.S., op.cit. p.8
32. Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) was an undergraduate of Cambridge. He stands out among those who wrote history as national epic and literature.
33. Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar (1837-1925) was a teacher researcher and author besides being a social reformer.
34. Viswanath Kashinath Rajwade (1863-1926) was a prominent historian from Maharashtra. He is best known for his fearless tolls for his cause.
35. Panikar. K. A. *Indian Renaissance*, Sterling Publisher, New Delhi, 1983, p.183

36. Born in 1930, formerly Professor of Ancient Indian history at the Jawaharlal Nehru University where she had a decisive role in building the Centre for historical studies.
37. Thapar Romila, *Ancient Indian Social History*, New Delhi, pp.375-376.
38. Sreedharan. E., *op.cit.* p. 436
39. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri (1892-1975) was a famous professional historian of south India. He succeeded K. Aiyangar as Professor of Indian history and archaeology at the Madras university.
40. Yadav Nirmal, *Teaching of History*, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, 2004, p.35
41. Ghate V.D. *op.cit.*p.19
42. Shah.K and Sangle. M, *op.cit.*, p.168
43. Gilbert Felix, *History Choice and Commitment*, Harvard University Press, England, 1977, p. 449
44. Barpujari. H.K., *The Comprehensive History of Assam*, vol.V, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati, 1993, p.223
45. Sahu. N. K.(ed) *A History of Orissa*, Calcutta, 1956, p.xiv
46. Mitra Rajendralal (ed) *Centenary Review, Asiatic Sociiety of Bengal* (1784-1883), Part I, Asiatic Society, Calcutta, p.2
47. *Proceeding of the Asiatiic Society of Bengal*, January 1830, for details see history of the society by Rajendra Lal Mitra, Centenary Review of the A.S.B, Calcutta.

48. Ibid. pp.4-5.
49. Goswami. A.N., *An Account of the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti*, Guwahati, 1993, p.1
50. With the objective of obtaining a greater share in Government for educated Indians, it was a Scotsman, Allan Octavian Hume who brought about its first meeting in Bombay with the approval of Lord Dufferin, the then Viceroy.
51. Mazumdar. R.C., op.cit. p.31
52. Gilbert Felix, op.cit. p.448
53. Panikar Sardar. K.M. , From Radio Broadcast on May 15, 1962 on 'Political Oneness'.
54. Henry T. Colebrooke, a Mathematician came to India at the age of eighteen and studied Sanskrit at Banaras. Later on he was appointed as professor of Sanskrit at the Fort William College. His importance to the Indology was second to William Jones.
55. Mahadev Gobind Ranade born in 16th February 1842 in Nasik. He studied in Elphinstone College in Mumbai at the age of fourteen. He belonged to Bombay university's first batches for both B.A (1862) and L.L.B (1866). Later on he was appointed Presidency Magistrate.
56. Sen. S.P., *Sources of the History of India*, vol.I, Calcutta, 1988, p.iv
57. Sreedharan.E., op. cit. p. 392

58. James Prinsep (1799-1840) was assay master at the Calcutta Mint. He became famous for decipherment of old Brahmi alphabet of Ashokan inscriptions.
59. Sir Charles Wilkins (1749-1836) was an English typographer and orientalist, notable as the first translator of *Bhagavad Gita* in English. Contributed to the reconstruction of history through epigraphic studies beginning in the year 1781.
60. Dutta, L., *History of India*, Bina Library, Guwahati 1978, p. 115
61. Government of India, Home Department, Resolution No. 1-58-71, Date 8th June 1883.
62. Pandit Bhagwanlal Indraji (1839-1888) is well known for his contribution to the field of archaeology, epigraphy and numismatics. He also photographed in those days when photography was still new.
63. Sreedharan. E. , op.cit. p.437
64. Sarma R.S., op.cit. p.292
65. *Vishakhadutta* was the son of Maharaj Bhaskardutta and grand son of Bateswar dutta. He was the author of *Mudrarakhya*, for details see Sarma Thaneswar *Sanskrit Sahityar Itihasa*, Gauhati, 1995, pp.200-202
66. An incorrect word whether formed against the rules of grammar or used in a sense not strictly Sanskrit, a corrupt language, one of the lowest forms of Prakrit dialect used by cowherds in Kavyas; in Sastras any language other than Sanskrit . see Apte V.S. The

Students Sanskrit English Dictionary, Second edition, Delhi, 1970,
p.31.

67. The Nagas of North east do not have their own scripts.

68. Kalita .Ramesh, *Tatta Tathya Aru Itihas Bitarka*, Tezpur, 2007,
p.119

69. Sir George Christopher Molesworth Birdwood (1832-1917) an
Anglo Indian official, numismatist and writer ,son of General
Christopher Birdwood. He was born at Belgaum in the Bombay
presidency. He devoted much time and energy to the encouragement
of Indian art, on various aspects of which he wrote valuable
monographs and represented India at all international exhibitions
from 1857-1901.

70. The second Boden professor of Sanskrit, Sir Monier William
founded the Institute and its associated library in 1883 as a focus for
Indian studies at Oxford.

71. Ramendra Sunder Trivedi, Haraprasad sastri, Rabindra Nath Tagore,
Yogesh Chandra Roy Vidyanidhi, Nagendra Nath Basu, Rakhaldas
Banerjee and Nalini Kanta Bhattasali.

72. *Sahitya Pariast Patrika, Astadas Samvatsarik Karyavivarani*,
Calcutta, 1319 B.S., pp.21-23

73. Article published through Sahitya Parisat Patrika was of very high
standard.

74. *Proceedings of the Rangpur Sahitya Parisad and its eight years works*, Rangpur, 1320 B.S., pp.5-6
75. Das Kundu Hargopal, *Rangpur Sahitya Parisad Patrika*, 1317 B.S., pp.1-3
76. Goswami. A.N. (ed) op.cit. p.24
77. Ibid.
78. Journal of the Calcutta Historical Society, *Bengal Past and Present*, Calcutta, 1907, pp.1-2.
79. *The quarterly Journal of the mythic Society*, vol.1, No. 4, Bangalore, July 1910, Editorial.
80. Rai, Roshini, *Varendra Research Society: A Study*, Unpublished M.Phil dissertation of Madurai Kamraj University, 2007, pp.14-15
81. Dr. John Peter Wade who originally came to Assam as a doctor along with Captain Welsh's Army in 1792 and compiled his translated version of Assamese Buranjis captioned *An Account of Assam* together with a graphic geographical account entitled *A Geographical sketch of Assam*.
82. Dr. Francis Buchanan, later known as Francis Hamilton but often referred to as Francis Buchanan Hamilton (1762-1829) was a Scottish physician who made significant contribution as a geographer, Zoologist and Botanist while living in India.
83. Major Adam White compiled the *Memoirs of Late David Scott* in 1832.

84. R.B. Pemberton wrote Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India in 1835.
85. See Montgomery Martin's *The History, antiquities Topography and Statistics of Eastern India Vol.iii*, in 1837
86. See John. M. Cosh's *Topography of Assam*, 1837
87. See William Robinson's work *A Descriptive Account of Assam*, 1841
88. See L.W. Shakespear *History of Upper assam, Upper Burma and North Eastern Frontier*, 1914.
89. Jean Baptise Chevalier, a French agent in India and later on Governor of Chandangore (1767-78) visited Assam in 24 November 1755 in the pursuit of opening relation between French and the locals, had taken in to many corners of Bengal, Assam , Tibet etc.
90. Jean Deloche former head of the Centre for History and archaeology, French School of Asian Studies, Pondichery.
91. *Ecole Francaise d' Extreme-Orient*.
92. Born in Normandy, French on March 02, 1977 and married to an Indian, now settled in India and engaged in working on the translation of French works that are relevant for India.
93. See Dutta Baruah Caroline & Deloche Jean, *The Adventures of Jean Baptise Chevalier in Easten India (1752-1765)*, first Publication in India, LBS Publications, Guwahati, 2008.
94. Sharma Manorama, *History and History writing in North east India*, Second edition, New Delhi, 2006, pp.61-62

95. See P.R.T Gurdon, *The Khasis* (Delhi 1993 Reprint); A Playfair, *The Garos* (Gauhati 1975 Reprint) N.E. Parry *The Lakhers* (London 1937) Lt. Col. J Shakespear, *Lushai Kuki Clans* (London 1912)
96. Bhuyan. S.K., (ed) D.H.A.S. Bulletin II, p.11
97. Four Plates recovered namely, the rock Inscription of Harjarvarman (A.D. 829-830) at Tezpur, Three Copper-plates and one seal known as Borgong Grant of Ratnapala first half of the eleventh century in the Tezpur sub division, the Sualkuchi grant of Ratnapala and the Gauhati Grant of Indrapala.
98. see *Epigraphica Indica*, vol.v (ed) E.Hultzsch, 1898-99, pp.181-188 .
99. Books and articles relating to Geography 87, Numismatics 6, History 40, Religion and mythology 46, Ethnology 36, Philosophy 64, Miscellaneous 55, for details see E. Gait *Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam*. Shillong, 1897
100. The Salastambha and the Pala dynasty.
101. Lahiri Nayanjot, *Pre Ahom Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal publishers, New Delhi, 1991, p.5
102. See Rai K.L. Barua Bahadur, *Early History of Kamarupa*, third edition, 1988, Guwahati,
103. Sharma Manorama, op.cit. p.69
104. Rai Bahadur Kalicharan Sen made a scathing attack on Non Cooperation Movement on 5th January 1922 at an anti non cooperation meeting held under the president ship of the then Deputy

Commissioner, Kamrup while he was secretary of the K.A.S., Hemchandra Goswami narrated the evil effects of non cooperation at a public meeting at Kamalpur (Presently Under Rangiya Sub division) for details see Barua Sagar, *History of Non cooperation Movement in Assam*, Nagaon, 2002, p.59

105. *Arunodaya* 1840, *Asambilasini* 1871, *Asam Mihir*, *Asam Darpan*, *Asam News*, *Asam Tara*, *Bijuli*, *Banhi* and *Asam Bandhu*.

106. The Gram Pradayini Sabha, 1857 at Nowgong, the Asomia Sahitya sabha at Calcutta 1872, the upper Assam Association 1880 at Sibsagar, Asomiya Bhasa Unnati Sadhini Sabha 1888 etc.

107. Bhuyan. S.K. Presidential address, *Indian History Congress*, Gauhati, 1959

108. Popularly known as Dhireswaracharyya, a reputed Sanskrit Scholar, epigraphist and poet who was called *Kalidasa* of Kamarupa.

109. Hemchandra Goswami (1872-1928) was one of the founders of *Asomiya Bhasa Unnnati Sadhini Sabha*. He was appointed as Extra Assistant Commissioner by the British government and deputed for collection of manuscripts for recovery of the history of Assam.

110. Lahiri Nayanjot, op.cit. p.6

111..Sarma C.N. (ed) op.cit. p.1