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# Buranji in Northeast India: A 13th Century History Project of Assam

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## Abstract

The writing of *Buranji* in the geographical area that we now call Northeast India began with the establishment of Ahom kingdom in 1228 CE. The first Ahom king, Sukapha, who came along with soldiers and kinsmen from upper Burma ordered the writing of *buranji* as a part of documenting the battles they fought, incidents that took place, followers they gained etc. Initially, the *buranjis*, which were either written under the orders of the king or by noblemen who wanted to record and authenticate their illustrious lineage, were written in Tai Ahom language, but later these chronicles began to be written in Assamese. The Ahom *buranjis* not only dealt with the royal family and polity but also with the neighbouring kingdoms with whom battles were fought or had diplomatic relations. Thus, Tripura *Buranji*, Jaintia *Buranji*, Kachari *Buranji* etc were written. Unlike modern historiography based on rationalist-positivist model, the *buranjis*, though they chronicle and narrate facts and events based on state documents and other archival material kept in *Gandhiya Bharal*, are imbricated with myths, legends and non-linear time. Therefore, *buranjis* are often coupled with literature, unlike the western disciplinary project of historiography which, nevertheless, has been critiqued by scholars like Hayden White, K. M. Pannikar among others. The article, taking into consideration Suryya Kumar Bhuyan's model of vernacular history writing, examines how the *buranjis* constitute a unique form that is indigenous and considerably different from the western paradigm of historiography disseminated by the colonial project.

**Keywords:** *Buranji*, Ahom, Assamese, Northeast, Indigenous

## I

The tradition of writing *Buranjis* is said to have begun in what we now call Northeast India with the arrival of the Ahoms from a region situated in upper Burma and southern China in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. As the *Buranji* tradition of writing history is unique to the region, it forms a significant body of historical chronicles of the kingdoms of Koch Behar, Kachar, Jaintia, Manipur and Tripura. Although Edward Gait dated *Buranjis* to 568 CE, yet he considered the *Buranjis* from 1228 CE as reliable. Gait thus gives us a scope to explore whether there were *buranji* like tradition in this region prior to the arrival of the Ahoms. However, some historians like Yasmin Saikia argue that *buranjis* are the 17<sup>th</sup> century chronicles which proliferated during the colonial rule (Yasmin Saikia 2004:22). *Buranjis*, which literally mean in Tai-Ahom language "a granary or a store-house of knowledge that teaches the ignorant" (Sarma 1989:744), or what John F Hartman has translated as "ancient writings" (Hartman 1997:227) are chronicles in prose written largely on the bark of the Sanchi trees under the order of the king or high dignitaries of the state. The *buranjis* were based on "the periodic report transmitted to the court by military commanders and frontier governors, diplomatic epistles sent to and received from foreign rulers and allies, judicial and revenue papers submitted to the kings and ministers for their final orders, and the day-to-day annals of

the court which incorporated all the transactions done, important utterances made, and significant occurrences reported by reliable eye witnesses" (Bhuyan 2010: xii). There were *buranjis* devoted to relation of the Ahom kingdom with the neighbouring kingdoms as in *Jaintia buranji*, *Kachari buranji* and *Tripura buranji*. Further, the *buranjis* devoted to diplomatic and military relations were known as *Kataki buranjis*; Ahom's relation with Moguls found a place in *Padshah Buranjis*. Further, *Buranjis* were of two types—the official and the family. The official *buranjis* were written by scribes based on state papers, diplomatic correspondences, judicial proceedings, etc. under the office of the *Likhakar Barua*, while the family *buranjis* were written by nobles or by other under their direct supervision, sometimes anonymously revealing "language, customs, institutes, official and judicial procedures, social and religious usages and intricate details of the state machinery" (Barpuzari 1992:2). It was first written under the instruction of Sukapha in Tai-Ahom language and later it began to be written in Assamese, particularly from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly, this tradition of writing history has a "marked similarity with the Southeast Asian tradition of historical chronicles" like *Yazawin*, *Hamannan* etc (A Saikia 2008:477). However, the colonial administrators were initially skeptical of such *buranjis* as they considered the narratives in *buranjis* being "blended with what is fabulous and uncertain" (A Saikia 2008b:146). For instance, H. H. Wilson was categorical in reprimanding the Indians for the blending of 'fabulous' stories with historical details (Wilson 1825:7; quoted in Mantena 2007: 398). However, Edward Gait, who heralds the western tradition of history writing in Assam with the publication of *A History of Assam* (1906), considered the *buranjis* as a remarkable and reliable source for writing history of the region. Further, S K Bhuyan maintained that *buranjis* "have conserved the feelings, customs and manners and institution of the people of Assam, and couched as they are in a natural and racy prose style, they constitute an unrivalled monument of national literature which few other peoples of India possess" (Bhuyan 1932:17; quoted in A Saikia 2008:499)

## II

During the colonial period, particularly in the later part of the 18th century, there was an attempt to locate the indigenous histories of the pre-colonial India. However, the texts that were discovered did not fit into the western mode of history. The discipline of history that emerged in the West studied past from a positivist rational framework. It required scientific evidence and an objective outlook. Therefore, the Occidentalists believed that Indians did not have historical consciousness. Incidentally, however, the Orientalists recognized some of the ancient Indian traditions of writing about the past, though they lacked the attributes of what make a Western/modern history. Nevertheless, *Textures of Time* (2003) argues that History in India is "embedded within the non-historical genres such as poems, ballads, and works within the larger *Itihasa-Purana* tradition" (Aquil & Chaterjee 2008:4; *Textures* 2003:1-23). What it referred to is the historical consciousness as embedded in both the oral and written traditions of India. If we look at the *Itihasa-Purana*, *Vanshawali*, *Caritas*, *Bakhar* and *Tarikh*, they are found to be replete with myths and legends and therefore, they might not be historically accurate or strictly chronological, but they present historical consciousness and traditions of India. Only because of their difference in style and language from modern western historical methods, they should not be dismissed as altogether ahistorical (*Textures* 2003:184-251). These texts provide a glimpse of the ancient Indian society, their religious practices, worldviews, architecture, occupational practices and food habits.

Interestingly, the Western scholars found Kalhana's *Rajatarangini*, the 12<sup>th</sup> century Kashmiri text in verse significantly close to history proper in the Western sense of the term, largely because of its Persian inheritance. It is well established that the Persian writing practices are closely connected to European tradition of writing, as they share a common source in Greek tradition. Nevertheless, the Western scholars never accepted the Persian tradition of history writing in India as vernacular/indigenous despite the proliferation of numerous histories of India by Indians following that tradition. In this context, Partha Chatterjee states, "these Persian chronicles remained confined to the military and administrative activities of Sultans and their officials and didn't strike roots in the indigenous, local and vernacular traditions of retelling past" (Aquil & Chaterjee 2008:2). On the other hand, C.A. Bayly argues that a great number of Indo-Persian histories were written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century which had distinctly modern concerns and "which appear to come from entirely indigenous sources and not from the promptings of a colonial education" (Aquil & Chaterjee 2008:3).

In *History in the Vernacular* (2008), the editors, Raziuddin Aquil and Partha Chaterjee present the vernacular traditions of history writing in India by examining a range of vernacular history from various parts of India— *Buranjis* of *Ahom* in Assam, Islam and Indian history at the Darul Musannefin in Azamgarh, *Niti* in Telegu, and the writings of Iswarchandra Gupta in Bengali, Narmad in Gujarati, Sri Ramamurti in Telugu etc. But they did not conform to the modern convention of history writing. However, Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam (*Textures* 2003:263-270) gave the example of a Telegu text of the 19<sup>th</sup> century titled, *Dupati Kaifiyat* that "appears to pass every test of modern historical writing and yet it was produced within a tradition outside the disciplinary grid of colonial education" (Aquil & Chaterjee 2008:5). Thus, it entails the presence of texts or what is called "Vernacular history"<sup>1</sup> that delineate the past in various regional languages in India.

Further, *Textures of Time* debunks the widespread assumption that India had no history writing tradition in the pre-colonial times. It illustrates certain suitable reading techniques which would help in identifying certain distinctly historical narratives that are embedded in genres specific to literature exhibiting certain discursive signs— "factual, bound by secular causal explanations, informed by an awareness of the credibility of sources, and largely having to do with them life of the state"— that the readers attribute to historical narratives (Aquil & Chaterjee 2008:4). Thereby, the historical narrative is constituted in the act reading. Rao, Shulman & Subrahmanyam further state that in the act of reading, one is constantly reading the texture, the internal structuring of a given narrative, wherein lies the historiographical mode. Such narratives as the authors of *Textures of Time* argue were abundantly found in South India, particularly in the works of *Karanam* in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Further, in the "Introduction" to *History in the Vernacular*, Partha Chatterjee discusses C. A. Bayly who pointed out that even in north India, such narratives were found in the works of the Munshis, though initially in Persian but later in Hindustani, Rajasthani and other vernaculars. Further, Prachi Deshpande describes *bakhar*, a form of historical narrative, which was prevalent in the western part of India, particularly in the Maratha region. It documented the history of a lineage or of an event. Similarly, in Bengal, contrary to common assumption of the production of historical narratives in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Gangaram's *Maharashtra puran*, Nawazish Khan's *Pathan prasamsa* were written in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Further, in the Northeastern Part of India, there was a *buranji* tradition in Assam, which dated back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It also influenced the

neighbouring kingdoms of Koch Behar, Kachar, Sylhet, Manipur, and Tripura to take up the form to narrate their histories. Thus, these vernacular histories have been influential in demolishing prejudices against the existence of history in pre-colonial India.

However, not much is known about the Ahom *buranji* in mainland India. It was Edward Gait who attempted to collect and translate most of the *buranjis*, and consequently he published *A History of Assam* in 1906. As Gait was a trained ethnographer, his method of historical enquiry was different from the western academia. Thus, he furrowed through both objective evidences and quasi historical materials to create an authentic historical account of Assam out of the *buranjis*. Thus, he gave a sense of legitimacy to *buranjis* as an accepted form of historiography. However, unlike Gait, other colonial historians were interested in creating colonial archives where manuscripts, records of the state, letters from bureaucrats and heads of foreign countries etc are preserved. The aim of preserving such records in colonial archives was to show how superior the colonial knowledge system was, particularly their positivist rational historiography, while devaluing vernacular history of India. The epistemic violence that the colonial system has exerted on Indian knowledge system generated a condition for acceptance of anything Western as modern and scientific. In this context, Pierre Nora has argued that "the discipline and practice of history in the past century accorded itself a scientific arsenal and enforced the view that historical method was produced to establish true memory. In effect, it sought to gain control over our access to our diverse pasts by discrediting other genres (oral and written) through which the past was often filtered into the present" (Pierre Nora, 1996: Vol I; quoted in Mantena 2007: 399). Thus, colonial archives were constituted of colonial ideology that consciously discredited and delegitimized pre-colonial modes of historiography.

Nevertheless, Gait worked hard to collect, collate, and unearth *buranjis* and other textual and material sources to create an archive for future historians of positivist rational order. The same task was later carried forward by S K Bhuyan and institutions like Kamrup Anushandhan Samiti (1912) and Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam (1928). It is an anathema that the history of Assam was not included in India's history. This exclusion is still conspicuously felt and talked about. It not only created alienation in the people Northeast India but also a distance with the people of mainland India. Therefore, as a visionary, Gait realized this colonial discrepancy and what effect it could have in the later time. In his preface to *A History of Assam*, he wrote:

The Ahom conquerors of Assam had a keen historical sense and they have given us a full and detailed account of their rule which dates from the early part of the thirteenth century...in spite of this there is probably no part of India regarding whose past less is generally known. In the histories of India as a whole, Assam is barely mentioned and only ten lines are devoted to its annals in the historical portion of Hunters Indian Empire." (Edward Gait, 1984: p. viii)

Thus, the possible ignorance or prejudices of colonial historians and Mainstream native historians hindered the possibility of exploring a unique and indigenous history of a porous and significantly heterogeneous region of India.

## III

It, however, may be noted that almost all *buranji* manuscripts began with the legend of Khunlung and Khunlai, the ancestors of the Ahom king, Sukapha, followed by narratives marking the establishment of the Ahom kingdom, though some later *buranjis* preferred not to follow this practice and limit their narrative to certain decades. It was also customary to update these narratives by successive generations. Often omissions and commissions were made to these manuscripts in the course of time at the behest of the king or members of the nobility, or at times due to compiler's own dislocation or interpretation leading to a change in language and original intent.<sup>2</sup> However, contrary to colonial historian, Mark Wilks oft quoted statement regarding the history of India as "deformed by fable and anachronism, that it may be considered as an absolute blank in Indian literature" (quoted in Mantena 2007: 398), the historicity of *buranjis* was accepted. A majority of Western scholars engaged with the history of Assam recognized *buranji* as an authentic representation of the past and as a reliable historical source. For instance, Edward Gait argued that the historicity of the *buranjis* "was proved not only by the way in which they support each other, but also by the confirmation which is afforded by the narratives of Muhamaddan writers wherever these are available for comparison" (Gait 1984: xii; quoted in A Saikia 2008b: 152). Even archaeological records (coins and rock inscriptions) proved the historicity of *buranjis*. Further, Gait accepted the reliability of dates found in the *buranjis* as they "are the original records, and are all in complete accord" (Gait 1984:104; quoted in A Saikia 2008b: 152). Similarly, native scholars trained in modern education like Hiteswar Barbaruah maintained that "*buranjis* are devoid of statement derived only from inferences or only supported by legends" (Barbaruah 1927; quoted in A Saikia 2008: 495), in fact one can bank upon them for maintenance of "accurate chronology" (Barpuzari 1990:3-8; quoted in A Saikia 2008: 496).

The texts like *Buranjis* which are considered as reliable chronicles acquire the status of history on the basis of the structure of sentences as emphasized by French philosopher, Jacques Rancière in the following words:

History can become a science by remaining history only through a poetic detour that gives speech a regime of truth. The truth it gives itself is that of a pagan incarnation, of a body of words substituted for erratic speech. It doesn't give this to itself in the form of an explicit philosophical thesis, but in the very texture of narrative: in the modes of interpretation, but also in the style of the sentences, the tense and person of the verb, the plays of the literal and the figurative. (Rancière 1994; quoted in A Saikia 2008: 495)

Ranciere's statement is critical of William Taylor who stated, "From the prevalence of poetry in Hindu composition, the simplicity of truth is almost always disguised. The painful result is that the Hindu mind has become familiarized with lying. Truth is insipid. Evidence loses its force" (quoted in Mantena 2007:398). Nevertheless, Ranciere here echoes Rao, Shulman & Subrahmanyam, who in their *Textures of Truth* underlined the importance of textures in comprehending the regime of truth, particularly the historicity of Indian texts. Thus, it is obvious from the writings of Ranciere, Gait, Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam that *buranji* can be regarded as historical literature. Apparently S K Bhuyan realized it much earlier. As he was trained in English literature, he had the theoretical orientation and the much-needed confidence to reconstruct the history of the pre-colonial Assam from the literary texts. So, Bhuyan followed the tradition started by Gait to study

the *buranjis*, which included the collection, collation and translation of old manuscripts. Often, he found several versions of the same manuscripts, which he carefully collected from the custody of local people. Then he would select events from various *buranjis* and shape them into a single narrative that would address the concern he was working towards in that particular work (Neog 1998:12; quoted in A Saikia 2008:500). Further, by reproducing letters in the *buranjis* verbatim, he underlined the pivotal position of diplomacy during the Ahom rule (quoted in A Saikia 2008:498). He also reproduced some of the conversations amongst various stakeholders in the narrative that betray the power and ideology of the people. Thus, the *buranjis* were “endowed with a much-needed legitimacy of truth” (quoted in A Saikia 2008:498). Bhuyan managed to put light on many new areas of Ahom history adding new dimension to *buranjis*. In this way, Bhuyan compiled, collated and edited seven *buranjis* between 1930 and 1936.<sup>3</sup> It amounts to editing and rewriting the *buranjis* from a positivist rational perspective with an ethnographic touch. Bhuyan also explained the process involved in editing thus:

The following processes are involved . . . transcription of the original; comparison of the transcript with the original to guarantee accuracy; grouping the transcript with the paragraphs and chapters with appropriate headings; collation of the text in the event of there being two or more chronicles containing the same version, so that no important detail or expression having any philological interest may be left out in the final version; correction of orthographical errors which reveal scribal idiosyncrasy rather than a system; rigidly avoiding any correction which will involve phonetic alteration; . . . numbering of the paragraphs; correction of the galley proofs; . . . correction of page proofs once, twice and even thrice by comparison with the corrected galley proofs and with press-copies and originals where necessary; compilation of the title page, table of contents, preface, errata, etc., and their transcription and proof reading. We are having a constant eye on the introduction of shorter methods as far as they are compatible with literary accuracy and the approved traditions of scientific editing of ancient texts. (DHAS Bulletin No.1(1932): 16)

In the edited volumes published by the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam, Bhuyan incorporated a table of contents, preface and introduction in English, followed by the chapters in Assamese, and brief analysis of each chapter in English. Referring to Bhuyan’s editing of *buranjis*, Yasmin Saikia identified two significant characteristics— “One is the maintenance of the original prose style, and the other the employment of a dual dating system, namely, the Indian Saka era as well as the Tai-Ahom Lakli calendar” (in Purakayastha 2008: 182).

As discussed earlier, Bhuyan regarded *buranjis* as ‘*buranji* literature’ for he recognized the limitations of the *buranjis*— though *buranjis* had historical value, they lacked the critical insights that modern history has (Purakayastha 2008:182). For instance, he failed to find the biographical narratives of some of the important personalities of pre-colonial Assam, like Jaymati, Mula Gabharu, Lachit Barphukan, Sankardeva, among others, who were instrumental in changing the narrative of the history of Assam in their times. Therefore, as an editor, Bhuyan tried to infuse a critical spirit into historiography for he had the task cut out to reconstruct the past. So, he treated the pre-colonial historical and quasi-historical resources of Assam with the rational spirit of the West to create a positivist history of Assam.<sup>4</sup>

Further, as stated by Sudeshna Purakayastha, S K Bhuyan moulded the *buranjis* to reconstruct a "modern past". This positivist historiography is an outcome of the acceptance of "the Western spirit of rationalism within the framework of an imaginative approach derived from pre-colonial vernacular traditions" (Purakayastha 238). Though the official *buranjis* contain the stories of *Swargadeos*, thereby marginalizing other significant historical figures, who, nevertheless, played a considerable role in nation building project of Assam, the family *buranjis*, which were written to prove noble ancestry (Gogoi 173), were free from the official narrative constraints of the *Gandhia Bharal* and, therefore, had illustrations of some significant, but marginalized historical characters. Referring to this, Golap Chandra Barua writes:

This buranji as well as Ahom Buranjis (both in Ahom and in Assamese) which I have come across till now supply very little information on many very important points regarding great personages such as (1) Lachit Barphukan, (2) Ramani Gabharu ... (4) Jayamati Kuari and others; and also relating to religious reformers, and poets, such as (1) Sankardeva . . . In order to compile a complete Assam Buranji, a writer will have to collect information on all the above points from Bangsabalais [family histories]. (Quoted in Purakayastha 2008:191; Barua "Preface")

Bhuyan drew from such vernacular traditions to write historical biographies. These deeds of the heroes were so graphically portrayed that Assamese readers loved to be identified as descendants of such heroes. Such heroes have redefined the contour of Assamese nationalism. Even today, they are selectively invoked to redraw Assamese identity and pride.

Interestingly, Bhuyan, while writing in Assamese sometimes used imaginative and rhetorical compositions in figurative language, and therefore alleged to have romanticized the *buranjis*, i.e. to move beyond the limits of factual accuracy.<sup>5</sup> So, his critics would hesitate to regard him as a scientific historian in the Western sense of the term. Nevertheless, *buranjis* as vernacular history frequently used literary genres. In this context, Bhuyan argued:

It is curious how the Assamese intellect nurtured by the extravagance of Vaishnava poetry could pin itself down to the chronicling of grim realities and hard facts in a colourless and impersonal fashion. The bridge between these two phases of the intellect labouring in the realm of fiction or of fact was afforded by the model set forth in the buranjis . . . the chroniclers enjoyed immunity from the influence of imaginative poetry and who were subjected to rigorous discipline and supervision as their works were compiled as a matter of official routine. (Bhuyan 1962: xxii-xxiii)

From the study of the edited volumes of the *buranjis*, it becomes clear that the boundaries between facts and fiction, rationalism and imagination, and history and literature got blurred. Referring to this, Sudeshna Purakayastha states, "Bhuyan sought to complement in his own writings 'facts' with the 'imaginative instinct' ingrained in *buranji* literature" (Purakayastha 2008:184). This becomes clear when Bhuyan, in an article entitled "Asomiya Chhatrar Sahityacharcha," (2005) stressed that training in literary studies and history would go a long way in the historiographical pursuit.<sup>6</sup> Such training would provide intellectual competence to untangle the *buranjis* and scientifically reconstruct the past of Assam. For instance, though the "*buranjis* recorded only those events which were crucial to the royal polity,"<sup>7</sup> the "small events, slips of the tongue, have also been included in the narratives of the *buranjis*" (Bhuyan 115; quoted



in A Saikia 2008:497), and it requires a trained eye to arrest its meaning in the reconstruction of the past from the narrative.

Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam in *Textures of Time* question the positivist method of 'filtering' facts from different historical narratives as it violates the integrity of the narrative. Through this process, colonial historians like Taylor, Wilson, Wilks among others attempted to separate the mythic from the historical in the narratives, causing violence to the integrity of the narratives themselves. In *buranjis*, for instance, the mythic and the historical occupy the same plane, with the mythic providing a moral framework for the actions or events. However, the colonial historians believed that Indians were "cognitively incapable of distinguishing between myth (the non-verifiable) and history (the verifiable)" (Mantena 2007:406). But Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam argue that the readers possess this cognitive ability to separate fact from fiction as they are trained to search the internal textual clues.

If we look at the narratives in *Buranjis*, the events which constitute the narrative in a linear time tell many stories with teleological views. As Ricoeur states: "A story is *made out* of events, to the extent that plot makes events *into* a story', the plot of which need not conform to chronological sequence since it is the configuration towards meaning that makes the story" (Ricoeur 1978: 105). So the stories that the scripter of the *buranjis* wanted to tell, according to White and Danto, depend on the sequencing of events/ facts. This is akin to what Aristotle attributed to construction of complex plot. Further, Collingwood and Dray made us realize that events in the *buranjis* and the changes they brought about depended on the choices made by the ruler and his royal court. Further, to reconstruct the authentic past, one has to, in the words of Hayden White, "discover the 'real story' within or behind the events that come to us in the chaotic form of 'historical records'" (White 1981: 4). When a story is told, the plot is revealed. This plot "symbolizes events by mediating between their status as existants 'within time' and their status as indicators of the historicity in which these events participate. Since this historicity can only be indicated, never represented directly, this means that the historical narrative, like all symbolic structures, says something other than what it says" (Ricoeur 1978:233). Thus, if one interprets the traces of the trajectory of the linear sequence of actions, one may be able to reconstruct the past. In the words of Ricoeur:

Every narrative combines two dimensions in various proportions, one chronological and the other nonchronological. The first maybe called the episodic dimension, which characterizes the story made out of events. The second is the configurational dimension, according to which the plot construes significant wholes out of scattered events. (Ricoeur 1980:178-79)

As it is the event which contributes to the development of plots, the event can be endowed with historicity. So, the reading of such events leads to the understanding of the past. *Buranji* is therefore an interpretation of the past. These *buranjis* are not only a gateway to the understanding of pre-colonial Assam, but also helped the modern historians to draw an authentic account of Assam in particular and the Northeast India in general. In this context, G. A. Grierson, while attributing the greatness of the Assamese language to its 'national literature' and the *buranjis*, said, "The Assamese are justly proud of their national literature. In no department have the Assamese been more successful than in branch of study in which India, as a rule, is

curiously deficient" (Grierson 1903:396; quoted in A Saikia 2008:477). The Ahom *buranjis* underscored the prevalence of vernacular history in pre-colonial Assam since the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

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### **Notes:**

<sup>1</sup> Partha Chatterjee stressed that vernacular histories are different from the authorized practices of modern academic history. Dr. Raziuddin Aquil, on the other hand, pointed out the limitations of vernacular histories and how they may be used as a weapon in the political struggle for identity based on religion, caste, region and languages. (See *History in the Vernacular*, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> *Buranjis* were often destroyed under royal patronage to contain malicious information that could harm their power and position. Such destruction of *buranjis* reveals the power and function these chronicles wielded in the politics of the precolonial state. For instance, Kirti Chandra Barbaruah, who supposedly collected all the available *buranjis* and then selected and destroyed those that 'misrepresented' him and his family. Further, facts and their associated narratives in *buranjis* are manipulated and added, depending on the nature of polity.

<sup>3</sup> Sudeshna Purakayastha enumerates the list of *buranjis* edited by S K Bhuyan—*Assam Buranji* by Harakanta Sharma Barua (1930), *Kamrupar Buranji* (1930), *Tungkhungia Buranji* (1932), *Deodhai Assam Buranji* (1932), *Assamar Padya Buranji* (1932), *Padshah Buranji* (1935), and *Kachari Buranji* (1936). The *Jaintia Buranji*, *Tripura Buranji*, and *Assam Buranji* from Sukumar Mahanta's family, and the *Satsari Assam Buranji* were edited in 1937, 1945, and 1960 respectively.

<sup>4</sup> In 1927 Bhuyan wrote: "We cannot conceive the exact nature of the white man's burden if the infusion of the critical spirit, love for truth for its own sake, veneration of the past and selfless worship of culture be eliminated from its category."

<sup>5</sup> Vernacular histories use literary genres, such as the novel, drama, autobiography, and even poetry to reveal historical consciousness. For instance, Bankimchandra's historical novels were criticized by Maitra for misrepresenting historical facts. However, the historian Jadunath Sarkar argued that Bankim searched for a higher level of truth, a romantic conception of artistic truth, that was for beyond the reach of any historians, (See Sudeshna Purakayastha's reference to S.K. Bhuyan's Assamese writings that stir romance of the queen Jaymati in "Restructuring the Past in Early Twentieth Century Assam: Historiography and Surya Kanta Bhuyan")

<sup>6</sup> For Bhuyan literary talent and historical training create a condition for understanding and interpreting historiography. (See Sudeshna Purakayastha's "Restructuring the Past in Early Twentieth Century Assam: Historiography and Surya Kanta Bhuyan")

<sup>7</sup> Bhuyan quoted 17th century evidence to prove Swargadeo Siva Singha's (1714–44) instruction to the Ahom pundit to specifically write only about the chronology of the Ahom kings and their works. (See Arupjyoti Sakia's "History, Buranji and Nation")

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