

তুংখুঙ্গীয়া বুৰঞ্জী

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TUNGKHUNGIA BURANJI

A Chronicle of The Tungkhungia Kings of Assam

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The publication of the present book, *Tungkhungia Buranji*, was part of the scheme inaugurated in 1925, under the auspices of the Assam Government, by Mr. H. C. Barnes and the late Srijut Hemchandra Goswami, for bringing to light representative Assamese classics with English translations. A transcript of an old buranji of the Tungkhungia dynasty of Ahom kings, compiled by Srinath Barbarua of the Duara family, was placed at my disposal by Srijut Sonaram Chaudhury sometime in 1925. Chronicles of the later period of Ahom rule being comparatively rare the above buranji proved a great revelation to me specially as it was compiled by an eminent Ahom official and noble. A proposal was submitted to the Local Government through Mr. Goswami to sanction the publication of Srinath Barbarua's buranji; and it received the approval of the Government in June, 1927.

The kings of the Tungkhungia family ruled in Assam for 145 years, A.D. 1681—1826. The Barbarua's buranji, though it purports to be a chronicle of the Tungkhungia dynasty, deals only with the history of 55 years, 1751—1806, as it commences with the accession of Rajeswar Singha in 1751 and ends with the events of the year 1806 during the reign of Kamaleswar Singha. The earlier kings, Gadadhar Singha, Rudra Singha, Siva Singha and Pramatta Singha, covering the period 1681 to 1751 are dismissed in the preamble only by the mention of the dates of their accession and death. The Barbarua's chronicle thus contains full accounts of the reigns of Rajeswar Singha, Lakshmi Singha, Gaurinath Singha, and of the first eleven years of the reign of Kamaleswar Singha. In all likelihood it was the very same chronicle which has been described by Sir (then Mr.) Edward Gait in his 'Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam,' 1897, p. 17,—

'A third *Assam Buranji* was found at Jorhat by Munshi Muhibuddin Ahmed, Extra Assistant Commissioner. It commences with the reign of Gadadhar Singha

in 1603 *saka*, 1681 A.D., but is very brief until 1673 *saka*, 1751 A.D. It gives a full account of the reign of Rajeswar Singha and of his immediate successors, Lakshmi Singha, Gaurinath Singha and Kamaleswar Singha.'

Srinath Barbarua's buranji being thus incomplete, I have, in conformity with the title of the book, prefixed an account of the earlier Tungkhungia kings, from Gadadhar Singha to Pramatta Singha. This additional account has been collated from two buranjis, *viz.*, the puthi recovered in 1912-13 by Mr. Goswami from the Bengena-ati Satra, dealing with the period from Suhungmung Dihingia Raja to Pramatta Singha, 1497-1751; and another manuscript chronicle discovered by me in 1925 in the godown of the American Baptist Mission, Gauhati, from the accession of Jayadhwaj Singha in 1648 to the initiation of Rudra Singha's campaign against Cachar in 1706. I have also given an account of the events of the ten years prior to Gadadhar Singha's accession narrating the circumstances which led to the ascendancy of the Tungkhungia family: this chapter has been collated from the above two buranjis and several other chronicles. The language of the original manuscripts, laid under contribution for this collated portion, has been retained. Srinath Duara Barbarua's list of the Tungkhungia kings, inserted in the first chapter ends with the accession of Gaurinath Singha; the remaining portion referring to Kamaleswar Singha, Chandrakanta Singha, Jogeswar Singha and Purandar Singha has been reproduced from other chronicles. The present publication, *Tungkhungia Buranji*, therefore, consists of the chronicle of Srinath Barbarua, corresponding to paragraph 1, the first 19 lines of paragraph 2, and paragraphs 83 to 342; the additional matter newly collated by the editor corresponds to the latter 27 lines of paragraph 2, and paragraphs 3 to 82. For an account of the Tungkhungia kings from the year 1806 to the termination of their rule in 1826, and the events up to the transfer of the territories of the Honourable East India Company to the Crown in 1858, the reader is referred to the metrical Assamese chronicle *Asamar Padya-Buranji*, shortly to be published by the

Department, and to the synopsis in English appended to that book.

The Assamese text and its English translation were first prepared by me from the transcript lent by Mr. Chaudhury which presented considerable inconvenience and difficulty in the absence of the puthi for purposes of comparison and verification; and as the transcript was not certified to be a correct and faithful reproduction of the original any discrepancy or irregularity was easily explained as a scribal error. This led to complications and doubts, which were, however, set at rest by the recovery of the original manuscript in March, 1931, from Srijut Saratchandra Goswami, B.A., found among the private collection of his father the late Srijut Hemchandra Goswami. The Assamese text was thoroughly revised and compared with the puthi before it was sent to the press, and it has undergone fresh revisions during the process of correcting the proofs in comparison with the original manuscript. The present book can therefore be regarded as a faithful reproduction of the original buranji of Srinath Barbarua; and our editorial intervention has been confined to the standardisation of the spelling as far as it can be done without involving any phonetic alteration, to the grouping of the text into chapters and paragraphs, to the numbering of the paragraphs, to the provision of chapter headings and a running marginal summary of the paragraphs. The absence of punctuation in the original puthi has made the task of the editor arduous and difficult, as words, clauses and sentences tend to coalesce into one another, and they have to be separated with discretion and judgment which requires a complete knowledge of the minutiae of Assam history. As the text preserves a beautiful monument of chaste and dignified Assamese prose as used by the enlightened gentry of those days it is imbued with vast potentialities for purposes of philological investigation. We have carefully weighed every word and phrase and noticed every morphological peculiarity and novelty of expression, and satisfied ourselves that it is in the original. Our attempt has been to present a con-

temporaneous historical and literary masterpiece before the public in as flawless a manner as possible. It may be mentioned that the preparation of the text and the translation has kept us engaged for full six years.

The picture of King Siva Singha and his Queen regnant Amvika Devi, also known as Draupadi and Madamvika Barkuanri, inserted as frontispiece to this volume, has been reproduced from a contemporary painting, being one of the numerous illustrations forming part of the famous treatise on elephants entitled *Hasti-vidyāranava*, compiled by Sukumar Barkath under the orders of that royal pair in 1734 A.D. The illustrations which are highly gorgeous and realistic were provided by two court-painters Dilbar and Doshai who were specially commissioned for the purpose. The book contains many other pictures of King Siva Singha and Queen Amvika Devi. From the close uniformity of the facial cut and expression maintained in all the pictures, it is evident that they all conform to a fixed prototype, and they therefore preserve an exact verisimilitude of the real features of the enlightened King and Queen. The superior skill and æsthetic judgment of the two artists are so much in evidence in their numerous paintings that the sketching of a realistic portrait was a matter of easy attainment to them. The names of the King and Queen are written at the bottom of the respective pictures. The court-painters would not dare to submit to their royal patrons anything but their true representations, as any deviation from the living models would produce a caricature and would be highly appalling to the æsthetic taste and ideals of the time. So we can take the frontispiece as containing faithful representations of King Siva Singha and Queen Amvika Devi, [The picture has been omitted in the second edition].

My thanks are due to Srijut Sonaram Chaudhury for lending me the transcript of Srináth Barbarua's buranji; to the Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti for lending the historical manuscripts in its custody; to Rev. A. J. Tuttle of the American Baptist Mission, Gauhati, for the manuscript buranjis originally collected for the Mission by Rev.

Nathan Brown during 1840 and 1850; to Pundits Lakshminarayan Chatterjee, M.A., Srinath Chakravarti, M.A., and Taranath Chakravarti Kavyavinod, for their ungrudging help in preparing a correct text of the Sanskrit preambles to the six historical letters found in Srinath Barbarua's chronicle; to Mr. P. Knight, Superintendent of the Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, for his unfailing courtesy and personal interest in the printing of the book; to Srijuts Basudev Misra, B.A., and Madhabchandra Barooah of the staff of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies for assistance in proof-correction; to Srijut Saratchandra Goswami, B.A., for lending to the Department the original manuscript puthi of Srinath Duara Barbarua; and to Srijut Hiteswar Barbarua for supplying me a genealogical table of the Duara family. Finally, I express my deep sense of gratitude to the Government of Assam for sanctioning the publication of this valuable historical classic, and also to Mr. A. H. W. Bentinck, Honorary Provincial Director of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, for providing funds to meet the expenses of publication.

A literal English rendering of the present Assamese text of the *Tungkhungia Buranji* is in the press, and is expected to come out within the course of a few months.

COTTON COLLEGE,
Gauhati, Assam.
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