



Review On Historiography Of Bengal Between 1847 To 1947

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ABSTRACT:

It is crucial to envision pre-independence Bengal as a distinct region before engaging in such a conversation. In between the middle of the nineteenth and the middle of the twentieth centuries in Bengal before 1947, there was an intriguing propensity to write annals about these sub-regions. A range of fresh factors are questioning accepted international and intra-national boundaries more and more today. People of all types can freely communicate and express themselves in virtual cyberspace without being constrained by national boundaries. Contrarily, the internet is frequently used to disseminate fervent sectarian and separatist ideas while having this liberal appearance. In this article, review on historiography of Bengal between 1847 to 1947 has been discussed.

Keywords: Historiography, Bengal, Region.

INTRODUCTION:

The different types of areas that historians, geographers, and sociologists have imagined are listed by the sociologist Bernard Cohn. First, historical regions, which are based on widespread folklore and local residents' recollections of their surroundings, Second: Linguistic Regions: In this region, identity is founded on a comparatively ancient literary language, whose standardized form is at least valued by the area's educated population. One may remember how the Bengali people of the former East Pakistan made the decision to secede from the parent state due to linguistic differences. [1] This perspective can also be used to analyse the current Shah Bag demonstrations in Dhaka, which support Bangladeshi society's commitment to secularism. Third: Cultural Regions: In this scenario, the local populace creates a unique identity based on certain cultural qualities, rituals, festivals, and ensuing behavior. For instance, the Bengali Hindus have a strong devotion to the goddesses Durga and Kali as well as other female deities. Fourth: Structural Regions: In this category, scientists have attempted to categorize regions based on the diversity of their social structures, such as caste systems and family structures. Mackim Marriot is credited with popularizing this strategy. [2]

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

According to A.K. Azad and D. Khanam (2015), disasters have increased in frequency in both developed and developing countries due to globalization. The Bengal Famine of 1943 is remembered in history as one of the worst tragedies to ever affect the Indian subcontinent. In light of the current catastrophic situation, the purpose of the current study is to revisit the agonising Bengal Famine of 1943 by examining the movie *Ashani Sanket* (Distant Thunder), which only told the tale of the famine. The present work has taken the initiative to highlight the nature, causes, and consequences of that specific famine from a disaster risk reduction qualitative approach, taking into account the awful history of that Bengal famine. [3]

It was only natural for a people who were able to forge their own culture to attempt to write their own patriotic history. Texts like the *Kulajis* and *Mangal Kavyas* demonstrate the Bengalis' innate sense of history. Based on such sources, contemporary authors like Durgachandra Sanyal and Dinesh Chandra Sen developed novels like *Banglar Samjik Itihās* and *Brihat Banga*. The validity and usefulness of the knowledge held in native memory, however, have been hotly debated. Later, we would discuss this argument. The Persian-Islamic school of historians has also compiled useful information on Bengal. This region was ruled by Islam for a very long time, but oddly, Bengal did not produce a notable Muslim historian until the Nawabi era (1710–65). However, Muslim historians who were not from Bengal provided crucial information about Bengal in their writings. [4] In his *Tabaqat i Nasiri*, Minhaj-us-Siraj brought up the contentious legend of Ikhtiyar ud-din Khalji's conquest of Bengal with just seventeen horsemen. The Delhi Sultans' interactions with Bengal, beginning with Balban, are mentioned by Zia ud-din Barani in his epochal *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi*. Without Barani's knowledge, Isami and Afif also gathered some information. In his *Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi*, Sirhindi gave an accurate description of Bengal. As Abbas Khan Sherwani did in his *Tarikh-i-Sher Shahi*, Afghan historians under Sher Shah and his successors also provided some information on Bengal. But beginning with the Mughal era, more thorough examinations of Bengali history could be found in the writings of Muslim historians. Three major accounts of Bengal are found under the reign of Akbar, beginning with the work of Abul Fazal. Sadly, despite diligent investigation, his huge *Ain-i-Akbari* does not always give accurate information about Bengal. Fazl appears to have had some incomplete information on this subject. However, a less well-known book by Nizam ud-din Ahmed Bakshi called *Tabaqat-i-Akbari* has a pretty trustworthy chapter on Bengal's Muslim kings. [5]

The discovery of Mirza Nathan's *Baharistan-i-Ghayabi* filled a significant gap in the history of mediaeval Bengal. He spent roughly twenty years in Bengal with the Mughal army and navy and had firsthand knowledge of this region. He could then provide a true overview of Bengali society and history. He provides a reliable account of Bengal's Mughal conquest. The 656-page manuscript is broken up into four sections. The governorship of Islam Khan is the

subject of the first part, which is 282 pages long. The time period of Qasim Khan is then described. The final section focuses on Ibrahim Khan's leadership and the rebel prince Shah Jahan's execution of him. Shah Jahan's journey across Bengal and eventual retreat are described in the final portion. Also offered here are fascinating and little-known facts concerning a number of Bengali zamindars and rajas of Koch, Bihar, Assam, and Tripura. After that, during the Nawabi era, some significant works on Bengal's history were finished in this province. They naturally contain important information on the history of the tract. [6]

A significant effort, the *Siyar-ul-Mutaqherin* of Ghulam Hussain Tabtabai contains a substantial quantity of information on Bengal's history, society, and culture. The author said that he had made every effort to maintain his objectivity and strictness. "It offers a thorough insight into the circumstances that caused the Mahomedan power to crumble and the elevation of the Marathas, and it brings us to the first steps that led to the occupation of Bengal and subsequently of all of India by the British administration," said the translator John Briggs. The author's picture of the personalities of Shuja-ud-din Khan and Aurangzeb reveals the breadth of his observation. [7]

These descriptions also include appealing stylistic elements. His analyses frequently alter the widely held perception. Nawab Sarfaraz Khan is typically characterized as a moron and debaucher. However, Ghulam Hussain paints a remarkably different image and demonstrates that Sarfaraz had the utmost allegiance from his followers. The narrator has accurately described the current state of sociopolitical deterioration to us. The book's greatest asset is its incredibly thorough and critical account of the Bengal Nawabs. Due to his intimate ties to the Bengal court and his friendship with numerous English officials, the author was able to gather a wealth of first-hand information. He therefore has the necessary tools to write such a history. His writings provide a local perspective on the significant events of the eighteenth century that frequently effectively contrasts the predominately English account. He displays an educated and philosophical mind in his examination of the demise of the Mughal Empire and a comparison between Mughal and British officials. [8]

The *Riyaz-Us-Salatin* by Ghulam Hussain Salim Zaidpuri, a history of Bengal from the earliest ages to the beginning of British administration, was a more ambitious undertaking. All previously written publications on the history of Bengal, including extremely rare ones like that of Haji Muhammad of Qandahar, were consulted by the author in this case. Additionally, he researched coins, inscriptions, and building remnants, particularly those from the erstwhile provincial capitals of Gaur and Pandua. Even European researchers like Blochmann and Hoernle were fascinated by this research. [9] Although the chapter on the Buddhist-Hindu era is more fiction than reality, it is true that information about that time period was very limited at the time. The historical account becomes rather trustworthy after this. He considered it a fortunate stroke of luck that Ikhtiyar ud-din Khalji had come to Bengal with the enlightening Islamic worldview. By assuming that Hind, the person from whom this

country got its name of "Hindustan," was a son of Hem and a descendant of the Biblical hero Noah, Ghulam Hussain ingeniously attempted to connect the history of Bengal to the annals of Islam. It is asserted that Bang is a son of Hind, from whence Bengal gets its name. His descriptions of people are vivid, as evidenced by this image of Raja Mohanlal. [10] However, Rajah Mohanlal "coiling himself around the brain and skin of Siraj ud-Daulah, he forgot himself so far that he thought there was no one else".

His tolerant evaluation of the Englishmen serves as evidence of his efforts to adapt to modern circumstances. He has a fatalistic view of history. However, the work has some significant flaws. Despite his grandiose claims, the author did not actually consult several of the ancient Persian texts, like Makhjan-i Afghana and Akbarnamah, when he wrote in 1787. An examination of his work closely reveals this. Because he mostly relied on several questionable collations, he made grave errors. He confused Nasir-ud-din Mahmud with his grandson Nasir-ud-din Ibrahim and attributed Sulaiman Karrani's 25 years of rule to him. Stewart and Alexander Dow were more perplexed, as they followed him blindly. [11]

Salim-Tarikh-i-Bangla Ullah's is another Persian text that covers Bengal's history from the time of Ibrahim Khan to Alivardi's rule. Although it provides some important socioeconomic statistics, it is not a highly trustworthy source overall. The Islamic historiography of Bengal needed to be briefly mentioned because it served as a key source of information for many local historians. As a result, works like Siyar and Riyaz had a significant impact on Bengal local history. [12]

Now we will quickly discuss the growth of macro-historiography in Bengal and some features of Bengali historical thought that influenced local historians in Bengal. We may start with the founding of the Asiatic Society, which helped Indian thinkers adopt Western techniques. The founding members, Sir William Jones, Charles Wilkins, who translated the Monghyr inscription of the Palas, H.T. Colebrooke, a scholar of Sanskrit, Horace Wilson, a religious historian, James Prinsep, the creator of Sena Historiography, and Sir Alexander Cunningham, an archaeologist, all made significant contributions to the society in its early years. [13] Among the Indians connected to the society, Raja Rajendralal Mitra earned a name for himself by establishing the chronologies of the Pala and Sena dynasties. Fort William College's founding in 1800 helped enhance Bengali history writing as well. The administrators of the college ordered histories such as Raja Pratapaditya Charitra by Ramram Basu in 1801, Raja Krishna Chandra Rayasya Charitra by Rajiblochan Mukherjee in 1805, and Rajaboli by Mritunjoy Vidyalankar in 1808. These groundbreaking works of Bengali historiography, however, heavily relied on folklore, historical tales, and social mythology. Thus, they cannot be referred to as history in the sense of today. We might also note Charles Stewart's *The History of Bengal* (1813) and John Clark Marshman's *Outline of the History of Bengal*, both published by the Serampore Mission (Srirampur, 1839). Although these volumes were written in English, there is no denying their influence on Bengali

historiography. Many Bengali nano- and macro-historians found inspiration in these volumes, which gave the Bengalis a trustworthy framework for understanding their own history. Through the "Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge," Derozian scholars including Reverend Krishna Mohan Banerjee, Govinda Chandra Sen, and Pearychand Mitra significantly advanced historical knowledge in Bengal (established in 1838). Significantly, in 1840, the government added Bengali history to the educational curriculum. Soon, writers in both Bengali and English developed a profusion of works on Bengali history aimed at young students in both languages. These texts significantly increased interest in the topic among literate Bengalis. To improve the market for their publications, they were written in a clear format and aimed to contain the latest study findings. Prathama Siksha Bangalar Itihasa by Rajkrishna Mukherjee, which was published in 1874, deserves special notice among these masterpieces. The author, Bankimchandra, lauded the book for its methodological sophistication and factual veracity. [14]

There were a few elements that contributed to the seeming growth of Bengali history. The creation of typical Bengali writing by the middle of the nineteenth century was the most significant development. Bengali writing was greatly influenced by Persian in the late eighteenth century and was not employed for serious literary goals. Persian and Sanskrit were mostly employed by Bengali scholars. In the beginning, at Fort William College, pedants like William Carey, Ramram Basu, and Rajiblochan Mukherjee tried to write in persuasive Bengali prose. Rammohan Ray made strides by using Bengali to express important philosophical and historical ideas while attempting to free it from undue Sanskrit and Persian influence. The emergence of Bengali prose was supported by the publication of publications and journals like Samachar Darpan in Kolkata and nearby cities. [15] The government replaced Persian as the official language in 1837 with English and, to a lesser extent, Bengali in the local dialect. The desire of the government for Indians with English education was announced by Governor General Lord Hardinge in 1844. The government's desire to spend money on primary education in the local vernacular was stated in Wood's Dispatch in 1854. An English-educated elite Bengali prose that was uninfluenced by Persian culture was thus becoming necessary. Iswarchandra Vidyasager contended in this regard in 1853 that only competent Sanskrit scholars could produce such a sophisticated Bengali. Since many of the Vidyasagar-led Sanskrit College's graduates were looking for suitable employment, there was no shortage of the competent individuals needed for the project. By the 1850s, a purified and transformed Bengali writing full of Sanskrit terms had emerged as a result of their efforts, allowing for the creation of serious literature (Bisuddha Pranali). The contribution made by Vidyasagar himself was the incorporation of tatsama terms into modern Bengali literature. Here, we see a clear tendency among the "bhadraloks" to reject the traditional Persianized cultural standards and embrace a more European framework. This opened the door for the introduction of new historical literature that was devoid of myths, legends, and tales and was based on criticism. One must recognize Bankimchandra

Chatterjee's effort in this instance. There is no need to recapture his achievements because his place in Bengali culture is so wonderful. It is sufficient to mention that, by penning excellent historical novels and history-focused articles in the newly developed Bengali prose, he popularized history among the literate Bengalis. Historical research was not yet well developed at that time, but Bankim foresaw the future significance of fields like anthropology, philology, and sociology. The goals of this trailblazing intellectual giant were to foster a sense of patriotism in the Bengalis and disprove the erroneous beliefs advanced by prejudiced European professors. He believed that the Bengalis had a responsibility to record their own history in their native tongue. Thankfully, the following generation of academics put his ideas into practise. As a result, Bankim had a significant impact on both language and history. [16]

As educated Indians became more aware of their great past and the excessive pretentiousness of the cosmopolitan intellectuals, Bankim had struck a chord. As a result, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, Bengali writers showed a strong interest in learning more about the ancient history of their nation. It should be noted that the rising wave of patriotism in society paralleled the growing popularity of history. The macro-Indian and micro-Hindu bhadrak levels of the patriotic consciousness coexisted. A number of associations, including the "Patriots Association" (1865), "Hindu Mela" (1867), "National Society" (1870), and—most significantly—the "Indian Association" (1876), which planned the first all-India political gathering, "the National Conference," in 1883, were founded as a result of the newly discovered Bengali assertiveness. We can observe that the Bengali bhadrak's concern for Jatiprathista (creating a collective identity) is growing, both inside the historians' community and within the larger societal setting.

History was popularised by another genre, historical fiction, which was closely related to romantic amateur historiography. Bengali novelists, playwrights, and poets frequently borrowed from recently found historical materials. Due to several socioeconomic restrictions, it was difficult for a Bengali to express himself openly during those colonial times. The authors therefore went to a bygone past where men readily gained heroism, the kings lived in splendour, and the troubles of the common people were immediately solved in order to escape from everyday humdrum living. As a result, Bengali authors from the middle class quickly adopted Rajasthan, the Rajas' home state, as the backdrop for their ideal fantasy world. *Devi Chaudhurani* by Bankimchandra is a wonderful illustration of this romantic escape. [17] The historical background was frequently required to covertly tackle modern themes like patriotism. An example of a book where the author subtly promoted patriotism is Bankim's *Anandamath*. The contributions of Bankimchandra, Nabin Chandra Sen, Girishchandra Ghosh, and Michael Madhusudan Dutta are too extensively documented to be explored here. The fact that several lesser-known novelists also produced historical fiction

and found a significant audience during the time of Bankim and Rameshchandra Dutta is more intriguing.

These books dealt with a few particular issues. They were initially preoccupied with nostalgia for the past's wonderful times. Novels like *Kanchanmala* by Haraprasad Shastri and *Bangadhupa Parajaya* by Pratapchandra Ghosh express this sentiment. As with the 1857 Mutiny and other anti-British uprisings, several of them dealt with such issues as well. These books capture the nuanced Bengali reaction to colonialism. Even though these authors were aware of how exploitative colonial rule was, they were unable to fully embrace the Mutiny. The Naik insurrection of Medinipur is shown in works like *Amar Simha* by Nagendra Gupta and *Shalful* by Prabodhchandra Sarkar as examples of this genre. Good books about the Mutiny were written much later by Pramatha Chaudhuri, Mahasweta Devi, and Gajendra Kumar Mitra. Thirdly, some of them were based on lore and events unique to the area. [18] These works focus on micro-level lore and personalities and offer insightful portrayals of rural terrain and culture. This genre includes works like *Ilchoba* by Ramgati Nayaratna, *Ranachandi* by Haranchandra Raha, and *Rajbala* by Raj Krishna Mukherjee. In these endeavours, there was frequently a romantic atmosphere. As Bijitkumar Dutta has underlined, novels based on local history are important. He claimed that these books inspired readers to have a strong, passionate affection for the countryside. After reading these books, readers were compelled to learn more about the indigenous culture that was being ignored in the communities. Numerous minor Bengali historical occurrences that received little attention in popular literature were frequently highlighted in these works. They also emphasised the histories of the less significant neighbouring states of Tripura, Manipur, and Cachar. It must be admitted that these rather unimportant authors contributed to the advancement of macro- and nano-history. In the introduction to *Maharaja Nandakumar*, Chandicharan Sen stated, "This tale is designed to create interest in history among the Bengalis." The claim that "This historical fiction is meant to make history appealing to unfriendly Bengali readers" was backed by Haranchandra Rakshit in *Banger Sheshbir*. The complicated relationship between formal, professional history, history based on traditional sources, and historical literature has recently been discussed by Rosinka Chaudhuri. She mainly concentrated on the discussion around the well-known Bengali epic poem *Palashir Yuddha* (The Battle of Plassey), written by Nabinchandra Sen and published on April 15, 1875. The novel was highly received at the time of its release by the literary elite, including Bankimchandra. Sanyal & Co., a Calcutta publishing business, even produced a textbook version appropriate for students. The issue, nevertheless, first surfaced in the 1890s. In his biography of Siraj ud-Daulah (1897), Akshaykumar Maitreya sharply attacked Sen for portraying a wholly fictionalised version of Siraj. Sen vividly captured the gradual decline and demise of a morally debased and weak-hearted Siraj in his poetry. In this case, Siraj is essentially a stand-in for the rotten Bengali nobility of Nawabi times, which had no chance against the lively and optimistic British. Maitreya claims that Nabinchandra, in order to

emphasise his story, purposefully twisted Siraj's persona. In reality, Siraj was a patriotic leader who was betrayed by his egotistical subordinates. In his text, Maitreya tried his best to paint a favourable picture of Siraj. He claimed that the lyrical portrayal of Nabinchandra was detrimental to society since it deceived the public readership. Interestingly, Tagore soon chastised Maitreya for his actions (1898). Reviewing Akshaykumar Maitreya's *Siraj ud-daulah*, Tagore charged the author with being overly favourable to Siraj and violating "the laws of history" as a result. As a result, near the close of the nineteenth century, we saw a growing interest among Bengali intellectuals in establishing the true past of their people. Of course, they attempted to avoid myth and fantasy. Between 1890 and 1915, Bengal saw the institutionalisation and professionalisation of history as a field of study. Scholars like Akshay Maitreya, Ramaprasad Chanda, and Rakhaldas Banerjee continued the work that Rajendralal Mitra had begun. They were concerned that very popular traditional indigenous history and historical fiction may contaminate the discipline of history, which they were attempting to put on a separate pedestal. They were therefore fairly eager to make a distinction between myth and history. From this perspective, it is possible to understand Akshaykumar Maitreya's scathing criticism of Nabinchandra Sen. In a similar spirit, Satishchandra Mitra criticised Bankimchandra for his unhistorical portrayal of Sitaram in his *Jessore-Khulnar Itihas* (1914).

As a result, we can observe that at the end of the nineteenth century, a lot of changes had taken place within the Bengali intellectual community, which inspired history enthusiasts to search for historical evidence in the underdeveloped countryside. [19] Now, we'll try to identify some specific causes for the Bengali local history genre's expansion starting in the 1860s. First, between 1858 and 1905, the geographical and administrative map of Bengal became quite stable. Most of the district boundaries were consistent over this time, with very minor changes (except the extreme northern region). District boundaries within the newly formed provinces remained constant even after the Partition of 1905. As a result, the educated population of a region may identify as members of a clearly defined unit and dedicate themselves to the preservation of that region's history. Intellectuals from Kolkata and other regions can also identify a single district as a unique entity and treat its history as a separate subject worthy of investigation. We observe a rise in Bhadralik interest in mapping and geographic surveys starting in the 1850s. They had a propensity to be more specific about their own areas. Their sense of social identity was reinforced.

Second, the government conducted numerous surveys and investigations in the districts, yielding a wealth of original knowledge about the region. The bhadr लोक of the tract became more aware of and interested in their history as a result, which encouraged them to go on their own journeys there. Here, two different survey types are quite crucial. The revenue surveys that were done between 1763 and 1947 come first. The primary goal of these was to generate government revenue in a planned manner. Naturally, the surveyors made every

effort to gather accurate data about the rural community, and as a result, a sizable data bank was produced. In addition, Bengali authorities participated in the exercise alongside British officials, and it's possible that some of them, along with their companions, found it interesting to portray the history of the places they visited. The medical topographical surveys came after them. [20] These surveys were conducted with the intention of documenting Bengali population patterns and health. Population density; birth, death, and marriage rates; followers of various religions; the root causes of poverty; and crime were among the topics examined. Evidence from both the written and spoken word was used. These kinds of reports about a few Bengali areas, including Kolkata and Dhaka, were printed between 1837 and 1840. They were of very high calibre and considerably expanded the body of local knowledge.

Nano-historical studies also received a boost from some other government initiatives. Records from the Collectorate and the Court were preserved carefully at the district record rooms. 44 A "Presidency Committee of Records" in Kolkata and "Record Committees" in each district headquarters were established in 1820 to organize and preserve district government files. The "Record Rule" was established in 1854. Harachandra Ghosh quickly illustrated the opportunities the record rooms provided for local historians when he used official records to create a topographical and statistical sketch of Bankura and Howrah in 1838. Based on comparable sources, Govindchandra Basak, the Deputy Collector of Chittagram, produced Descriptive Notices of Chittagong in 1842. H.V. Bailey and J.C. Price, two Englishmen, used government records to create two accounts in Medinipur. By releasing some administrative records under the heading "Selection of Records," beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century, the government furthered this approach.

Sir Richard Temple methodically gathered a vast quantity of information from individual officials about various areas of the Dhaka division, which basically consists of the entire Eastern Bengal. The Principal Heads of the History and Statistics of Dacca Division, the result of his labours, was published in 1868. Several more English officials followed his example. The English administration developed a greater interest in Indian local life following the Revolt of 1857. This is due to the fact that local expertise was essential for the development of the railways, the acquisition of coal for the trains, and the growth of novel crops like cotton and indigo. However, this antique attitude of the British bureaucrats significantly decreased in the twentieth century for a number of reasons.

Walter Kelly Firminger, though, remained a splendid exception. The instances of Harachandra and Govindachandra demonstrate how the Bengali authorities participated in such data collection efforts and were undoubtedly motivated by them. They pioneered the practise of local history writing among Bengalis. Thirdly, Bengalis were aware of their own ancestry and were given the tools for cultivating the field as a result of Europeans regularly teaching history in newly founded schools and institutions. One of the intellectuals of the

younger generation, Bankimchandra, saw the importance of using information from rural areas to build the history of the Bengali people.

Fourthly, the educated Bengalis were prodded to write their own tracts by the increasing wave of nationalism that began in the 1880s. Because the British Government never harbored any negative views toward these initiatives and did not impose any of these works during the Swadeshi movement, some people have suggested that patriotic sentiments did not play a significant role in the formation of this genre. Additionally, the majority of local historians had little support for the Swadeshi revolution.

CONCLUSION:

However, this reasoning is flawed. Although the majority of these poems were not explicitly anti-British, the authors' strong attachments to their home towns show that they were nonetheless motivated by patriotism. Also, the fervent promotion of local antiquarianism by many less well-known people is a clear indication that these works promoted patriotism. As a result, we can see that starting in the 1860s, a separate phenomenon developed in Bengali: the propensity to write histories of diverse nano-localities.

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