

CHAPTER II

MAYONG IN MYTH AND HISTORY

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In most traditional societies where oral narratives rather than the use of written literature is the more functional means of communication on a large scale, myths¹ and legends were the key methods used by people to share experiences, provide amusement and transmit history. Although some stories may have changed over time with countless re-telling, most have retained their original foundations. Such narratives as folklore may have come about due to the people's fear of the surroundings or queries and doubts that they could not find an answer.² Myths and legends constitute the two major categories of traditional narratives and are preserved in two forms *viz*; literary, that is, manuscripts and as expressed through the living traditions such as festivals. This assumes importance since in a historical tradition; origin myths play a crucial role by providing a point of commencement of a community: the creation of the world, the origin of men and of gods, the justification of kingship etc. Peter B. Hammond³ observed that “....myths, legends and other tales constitute for the anthropologist a potentially rich source of insights into the principal preoccupations of a particular people; their major fears and chief pleasures, the situations regarded as most rewarding most dangerous, most amusing and most

¹ The word *myth* is used to describe a story that explains objects or events that occur in nature or the stories about the origins of customs or traditions. The narratives emphasize the nature of man's relationship to nature and to the supernatural. Peter B. Hammond, *An Introduction to Cultural and Social Anthropology*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1977, p. 318.

² Nabin Chandra Sharma, *Asamia Loka - Samskritir Abhas*, Bani Prakash, Guwahati, 2011, (Fifth Edition), p. 100.

³ Peter B. Hammond, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

tragic. In this sense the tales people tell, whether *original* with them or received, adapted and reinterpreted from the tradition of other peoples are likely to be quite literally, a symbolic projection of what is on their minds.” Thus, myths and legends of Mayong when studied in proper context can contribute to reconstructing their history.

The distinction between myth and history is well recognized. ‘*Mythos*’ as an utterance, often a tale recited in association with a religious ceremony are in a way the opposite of historical facts, in the sense that, unlike historical facts, what constitutes a myth is not verifiable.⁴ Despite this, myths and history cannot be counterpoised as true and false. In fact, myths represent reality but symbolically and metaphorically. Yet, myth in itself is not reality.⁵ It is important to note that the spectrums of myths are not to be taken literally; rather it involves the study of its text, texture and context. The central issue is to understand why certain myths were created at certain periods of time, who generated or invented them, what the motivation was and how the myths came to be transformed into collective beliefs. The social anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss in his book titled, *Myth and Meaning*, attempts to rediscover the role of myths for human understanding. While trying to find out the nexus between myth and history, he observed that “...the gap which exists in our mind to some extent between mythology and history can probably be breached by studying histories which are conceived as not at all separated from but as a continuation of mythology”⁶ The myths contain information about different places, which links communities to their memorialised

⁴ Myths are set in remote past and are considered as truthful accounts by the narrator and the audience. See Birendranath Dutta, *Folklore and Historiography*, Chennai, 2002, p. 91.

⁵ K. N. Panikkar, “Myths, History and Politics”, in *Frontline*, Chennai, Oct 5, 2007, p. 22.

⁶ Claude Levy Strauss, *The Meaning of Myth*, Routledge, London, 1978, p. 43.

past.⁷ The cultural contact of different linguistic groups like the Austric, Tibeto - Burmans and Aryans etc. have brought about various versions of folklore which may be understood in the context of ‘invention of tradition’.⁸

I

Every known culture has sacred stories of some kind which express the basic beliefs the people hold as to the nature of the universe and man’s place in the cosmos. There are myths that help to explain the creation of the universe and beginning of time. According to a popular myth, Mayong with a lofty hill on the bank of the Brahmaputra river was the favourite place of goddess Kamakhya. It is believed that there was a Sakti shrine located in the Mayong hill, above the present water body (*barghat*) at Burhamayong village. It is said that Devi Kamakhya visits the place every year on the sixth day of the month of *Bahag* (April-May) along with other gods and goddesses.⁹ There is a belief that the name Mayong is derived from *maya* or illusion where the Devi Kamakhya and other gods experienced *maya* at this place. At Burhamayong, near a water body (*barghat*), there are sacred sites such as *Kechaikhati-than*, *Bhagavati-than*, and *Shri Ganesh-than*.

The history of Mayong is closely linked to the prevalence and practice of Tantricism. The shrine located in Mayong hill is known as Mayong Kamakhya which associates itself with a myth connected to the well known Kamakhya temple on Nilachala hill. The myth makes Mayong a sacred abode of Kamakhya.

⁷ Jatindra Kumar Bargohain, *Asamar Sanskritik Itihas*, Vol.- I, Assam Sahitya Sabha, Jorhat, 2013, (Second Edition), p. 80.

⁸ Birinchi Kumar Baruah, *Asamar Loka- Samskriti*, Bina Library, Guwahati, 2005, (Eighth Edition), p. 3; Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (ed.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992. Introduction.

⁹ Dhanya Ram Roy, *A History of Mayong*, Olympia Publications, Guwahati, 2017, p. 78.

The belief is that Narakasura prohibited the performance of Tantric practices in the Kamakhya temple at Nilachala hill after he was deceived by the goddess in his attempt to marry her. Thus it was at Mayong that Tantric practices were carried out secretly for fear of Narakasura.¹⁰ Kamarupa is one of the best known Shakta shrines in India, and the Kamakhya temple is known for Tantric sacrifices, mysticism and sorcery. The goddess Kamakhya is closely associated with this religious site itself and is often referred to as Kamarupa-Kamakhya.¹¹ The two principal Sanskrit works viz; *Kalika-Purana* and *Yogini-Tantra* are important literary sources for Sakti worship in Assam. The birth place of Saktism is considered to be in the north-eastern region of India (Assam and Bengal) where it still holds ground.¹² This sect is believed to have been the most widely popular in Kamarupa by the 12th century CE to which period is assigned its chief scripture known as the *Kalika-Purana*.¹³ The association of Saktism with Tantricism is well known. However, Tantricism as such has four principle ramifications, viz; Saktism, Saivism, Vaisnavism and Buddhism.

Kamarupa is a well known *pitha* or *asanas* i.e. holy seat of the mother goddess, where Durga (the daughter of Himalaya) is believed to be always present. According to Hindu mythology, the places where pieces of Sati's dead body fell are said to have become *pithas*. There is a belief that the organ of the divine mother (*Maar-ongo*) fell in the area, after which the land came to be

¹⁰ Guneswar Deka, *Mantra Prasadha Mayong Aru Pabitaras Itihas*, Guwahati, 1995, p. 16.

¹¹ D.C. Sircar, *The Sakta Pithas*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1973, p. 15.

¹² A. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, (trans. Mrs. S. Ketkar), Vol.1, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1927, p. 252.

¹³ Maheswar Neog, *Sankaradeva and His Times: Early History of Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Assam*, Department of Publications, University of Gauhati, Gauhati, 1965.

known as Mayong.¹⁴ Yet, another myth narrates that Mayong represents a seat of the goddess where the upper part of her body/chest fell. According to a myth, after the death of Sati at the house of her father Daksha, Siva is said to have roamed the earth with the corpse of Sati. During this period of intense grief, the other gods attempted in different ways to console Siva though in vain. Visnu was then approached to bring Siva to sanity. Lord Visnu with his Sudarshana Chakra is believed to have cut the lifeless body of his consort Sati into fifty-two pieces which fell to different areas of earth. Each of these places came to be known as a *Sakti pitha*. In each of the *pithas* she is believed to be constantly living in some form together with a Bhairava i.e. a form of her husband, Siva. The religious crystallization seems to have taken place originally on the basis of a group of four *pithas* at a time which may coincide with the appearance of the early *Tantras*. The four main *pithas* represent the four cardinal points of the earth, and Kamarupa is said to have enjoyed a privileged position among them. In Assam, the *Sakta Pithas* are revered as abode of goddess in different places in her different manifestations.¹⁵

An archeological site of religious importance in Mayong is the Kachashila hill, which is situated on the bank of the Brahmaputra river. As a favourite recreation place for Uma-Maheswara due to its scenic beauty the deities visit the hill regularly. On one such occasion, a large tortoise is said to have come to the hill for the purpose of laying eggs. However, the tortoise sighted Uma-Maheswara engaged in amorous activities and commented that such acts should

¹⁴ Lokendra Hazarika, *Mayangar Itihas, Morigaon*, Rodali Prakashan, Jagi Bhakatgaon, Morigaon, 2011, p. 11.

¹⁵ Sakti is worshipped in Assam since ancient times and it is difficult to identify the exact date of the initiation of Sakti worship in the state. See Rumi Patar, *History of Sakta Pithas in Assam*, (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis), Department of History, Assam University, Silchar, 2015, p.1.

not be committed by a divine couple. The divine couple was enraged and thus their wrath fell on the tortoise. They cursed that the tortoise should remain as a rock forever at the Kachashila hill. Though the tortoise begged for forgiveness, the divine couple replied that she will get liberation from the curse only when the holy water of the Brahmaputra will touch her. The hill thus came to be known as Kachashila [*kacha*: tortoise; *shila*: rock]. It may be noted that there is a large stone in the shape of a tortoise which is seen on the hill facing the north-east direction towards the Brahmaputra River. There is one another version associated with this site of Mayong. Lokendra Hazarika in his work *Mayangar Itihas* observes that the rock in the shape of a tortoise was curved out by sculptors for using as a totem in tantric practices.¹⁶ In his observation the area was under the influence of the Buddhist tantricism who consider tortoise as an incarnation of Buddha. It is noteworthy that Raj Mohan Nath had also mentioned about the settlement of Tantric Buddhist emissaries in Mayong.¹⁷

Mayong is a veritable natural fort with the Brahmaputra river flowing on the northern side, the Kalong river on the southern side meeting the Brahmaputra river at Kajalimukh, and the Sonai river flowing in the East. Historically, Mayong includes the whole area of the western part of the undivided district of Nagaon except the south bank of the Kapili. Thus, this geographical area of Mayong, with four hillocks on the banks of the river Brahmaputra was considered a strategic location during the Ahom period of Assam history. The hillocks were used as watch towers for monitoring the movements in Brahmaputra river, the river itself providing a good communication network of waterways. During the

¹⁶ Lokendra Hazarika, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

¹⁷ Raj Mohan Nath, *The Background of Assamese Culture*, Dutta Baruah and Co., Guwahati, 1978, (Second Edition) p. 46.

Ahom rule, the military camp (*chawki*) was positioned at Kajali during the reign of Pratap Singha (1603-1641 CE). The Kajali Chawki always served as strategic military camp for the Ahoms, next to Guwahati.¹⁸ The officer in-charge of the post known as Kajali Mukhia Gohain was responsible for providing information to the Ahom king about the activities of the frontier kingdoms such as Jaintia, Panbari, Mayong, and Dimarua etc.¹⁹

The discovery of cannonballs in large numbers has brought to light a new aspect of Ahom military history and the significance of Mayong during the medieval Assam period. It may be mentioned that it was a bull of the village Kajali which accidentally knocked off the top layers of earth in the slope of the hillock and exposed the cannonballs.²⁰ Scholars opine that the site which is considered to be the storing place of the cannonballs may have been chosen so that it was convenient to transport them through the waterways with the help of boats.²¹ It is believed that there may have been over one thousand cannonballs although only hundred and sixty-five have been recovered till date. The rampart at Kajali Chawki is not very far away from the place where the battle of Saraighat (1671 CE) took place.

The cannonballs were of different sizes and shapes and it was polished which gave it its toughness. These cannonballs are supposed to have been

¹⁸ Lokendra Hazarika, “*Aitihashik Patabhumit Kajali Chawki*”, cited in Ghanashyam Saikia (ed.), *Souvenir: Silver Jubilee Celebration of the Shri Shri Vishnuyagna, Kajali chawki Vishnu temple, Morigaon*, 2009, pp. 6-9.

¹⁹ Sarbananda Rajkumar, *Itihase Suara Chashata Basar*, Banlata, Dibrugarh, 2000, p. 491.

²⁰ Dipankar Banerjee, “Bull Hits Hillock, History Spills Out- 400 year old Cannonballs in Assam”, *The Telegraph*, 30 May 2009; <http://www.telegraphindia.com/1090530/jsp/nation/story-11040024.jsp>; Accessed on 20/03/2016. On 28 May, 2009, cannon balls were discovered and with the assistance of the local people, the site was protected. See Appendix VII: Illustrations.

²¹ Ranjana Sarma, “*Etihashe Garaki Jua Kajali chawki*”, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

powerful enough to sink boats, pierce through defensive scaffoldings, kill foot soldiers and cavalry, and even knock out elephants. It is not known whether they were queried locally from the nearby Mayong hill or brought from any other place and stored here. Sashiram Saikia,²² an inhabitant of Hiloikhunda village, informed that cannonballs were supposed to have been prepared in the village. The local people contend that the boulders in the village which show deep marks as seen today, may have been the site used for smoothening the surface of the cannonballs.²³ It is a well known fact that the surface of the cannonballs should be smooth for providing better speed when used in the canons. The river ways may have been used for transporting the finished products from Hiloikhunda to Kajali Chawki. Moreover, just a few kilometers away in the eastern direction from the military camp at Kajali, there is a cave on the Mayong hill by the side of river Brahmaputra. This cave is believed to have been built by Pratap Singha in 1605 CE to guard against the invasions from the western side.²⁴ The cave was constructed under a large rock which was divided into several compartments.²⁵ Moreover, a rampart²⁶ was constructed that connects the military camp with the Mayong hill, the remains of which is still noticed on the banks of the Brahmaputra river near Hatibagara. The military camp at Kajali played a key role in thirteen wars out of the seventeen wars fought between the Ahoms and the Mughals.²⁷ Sarbananda Rajkumar²⁸ citing J.P. Wade's book titled, *An Account of*

²² Personal interview with Shashiram Saikia, 75 yrs, Farmer, Hiloikhunda on 20/02/2016.

²³ See Appendix VII, C.

²⁴ Nabajyoti Nath, "*Etihashar Jalangare Kajali Chawki aru Chanaka*", cited in Maniratna Deka (ed.), *Panchagoshai*, A Souvenir, 349th Aitihashik Burhamayong Gushai Uliua Mela and Rangali Bihu Utsav, Morigaon, 2017, pp. 49-51.

²⁵ Lokendra Hazarika, "*Aitihashik Patabhumit Kajali Chawki*", *op. cit.*, p. 6.

²⁶ See Appendix VII. C.

²⁷ Jayshree Kalita and Dhanmoni Kalita, "*Chandrapurat Paryatanar Sambhabaniyata aru Ear Bikash*", cited in Ghanashyam Saikia (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 36.

Assam referred to Mayong as a feudatory kingdom under the Ahoms. D.R. Roy mentions that that the erstwhile kingdom was declared a Mauza in 1833 CE but the inhabitants of the area continued the tradition of appointing titular kings although in a symbolic manner.²⁹ During the annual festival of *Goshai Uliua Utsav* celebrated in the month of April (*Bahag*), the ruling family participates and ensures the continuance of the old tradition. The ritual involves the parade of the king along with his officials from the Rajamayong village (new residence) to the Burhamayong village (old residence of the ruling family) when the titular king is dressed in his traditional attire.

In medieval Assam, many petty kingdoms including Mayong existed as independent political units and enjoyed complete autonomy in its internal administration. S.K. Bhuyan³⁰ lists such kingdoms as: Mayang (Mayong), Darrang, Rani, Beltola, Luki, Barduar, Bholagaon, Mairapur, Pantan, Bangoon, Bagaduar, Dimarua, Nelli, Gobha, Sahari, Dandua, Barepujia, Topakuchia, Khaigharia, Panbari, Sora, Dhing, Tetelia, Salmara, Garakhia, Baghargaon and Bhurbandha. The Ahoms maintained friendly relations with these vassal kingdoms and each vassal *raja* was bound to furnish a stipulated number of *paiks* (corvee labour of the Paik system) to work on the king's account, or pay the commutation money if exemption from personal service. In case of war the vassal

²⁸ Sarbananda Rajkumar, *Itihase Soaura Chashata Bachar*, Banalata, Dibrugarh, 2000, p. 491.

²⁹ D.R. Roy, "Heritage of Mayong: At a Glance", in Kashmiri Gogoi Baruah (ed.), *Oitijya: An Annual Publication of Journal*, Department of History, Karmashree Hiteswar Saikia College, Guwahati, 2015, pp. 9-12.

³⁰ S.K. Bhuyan, *Anglo- Assamese Relations 1771-1826*, DHAS, Guwahati, Assam, 1949, pp.9-10.

raja was expected to render personal service.³¹ The vassal kingdoms under the Ahoms were located on the both sides of the banks of the Brahmaputra river. It is interesting to note that, though Mayong itself was a vassal kingdom, it exercised control over other smaller kingdoms. Guneswar Deka mentioned that the rulers of Mayong had deputed some other smaller rulers that indicates about its influential political status.³²

Among all of the vassal kingdoms Desh Darrang was the largest in the north bank and Dimorua was the largest in the South bank of the Brahmaputra.³³ The size of the smaller kingdoms resembled a modern day Mouza. The neighboring kingdoms and geographical position of Mayong in central Assam were Kumoi, Kumoi Kacharigaya, Baghara and Sukhanagog on the east, and Gobha kingdom and Kalong River on the south. The Kumoi-Kachari kingdom was founded by a fugitive Kachari prince named Rudra Singha who was a native of Maibong in North Cachar Hills.³⁴ This kingdom was bordered by Mayang, Bajkata and Manaha- Kacharigaon in the west, Kumoi kingdom in the east, Kumdang hills in the north and Kapili River in the South. The vassal kingdom of Ghagua was founded by Pathat Singha³⁵ and it is believed that he had migrated from Khairim, one of the Jaintia kingdoms of the Jaintia Hills. Pathat Singha had spent several years as a wandering in the Panbari and Tarani Kalbari region prior to the establishment of the new kingdom. This vassal kingdom was surrounded

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10. The Paik system was an administrative organisation of the Ahom kingdom in which every male member from 16 to 60 years of age was to render services thus devising an effective system of labour mobilisation.

³² Guneswar Deka, *op. cit.*, p.12.

³³ Hatem Ali, *A Study of the Vassal Kingdoms under the Ahoms*, (Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis), Department of History, Gauhati University, Guwahati, 2003, p. 10.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³⁵ Personal interview with Mukul Raja, 44 yrs, titular king of Ghagua kingdom, Rajagaon on 12/03/2019.

by Hariya and Mayang in the west, Bangalpara, Bhalukaguri and Gagalmari in the north and Ghagua hills in the south. Such tribal polities in central Assam may be understood in the context of fluid political condition in medieval period and the search for new identities among the many ethnic communities.

Hatem Ali³⁶ while discussing Mayong as a vassal kingdom under the Ahoms mentioned that the kingdom of Mayang was known for witchcraft and sorcery. Citing the *Goid Puthi*, a manuscript of genealogy preserved by Ghanakanta Singha, the credit for establishing the kingdom goes to Suinat Singha, a prince of the Kachari tribe from Maibong, who had migrated to the locality with some of his followers. In attempting to explain this link, he opines that Mayang is a corrupted form of Maibong. The importance of elephants is indicated in associating the place name with the Tiwa word *miyung*, meaning elephant.³⁷ There is also the version of derivation of Mayong from Kachari word *mairong* meaning paddy, since the place was known for rich agricultural production.

Rama Pala, the king of Bengal sent his general Mayan with a strong army to invade Kamrupa in the 12th century CE.³⁸ The ruler of Kamarupa at that time was Joypala (1120-1138 CE) and he was easily ousted and Mayan established a town at Kajoli-Mukh, situated to the east of Gauhati and named it Mayangarh. This place is believed to be the present Mayong. It is said that Buddhist Tantric emissaries had settled here and since then Mayong was regarded as a centre of witchcraft and black magic. An inference that can be drawn from this observation

³⁶ Hatem Ali, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

³⁷ Lokendra Hazarika, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

³⁸ R.M. Nath, *The Background of Assamese Culture*, Dutta Baruah & Co., Guwahati, 1978, (Second Edition), p. 46.

is that during the 12th century CE, Mayong was under the control of the Pala king of Kamrupa i.e. Joypala. It is possible that there was an attempt to spread Buddhism by the Pala rulers of Bengal, in the newly occupied territories. Moreover, the tantric practices common in Hindu and Buddhist traditions could have been a factor for selecting Mayong in the venture of spreading Buddhism in Assam. The Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva records the victory of Mayana,³⁹ the general of the Gauda ruler Ramapala, over the king of Kamrupa although there is no reference about the new settlement of Mayangarh.

It is worthwhile to understand the centrality of the Kacharis in Mayong history and culture given that the founder of the kingdom is said to belong to this ethnic group of people. The Kacharis who are believed to have been the earliest inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley rose to prominence after the downfall of the Pala dynasty in Kamarupa. Therefore, when the Ahoms appeared in the political scene of Assam, the Kacharis were the most important and organized tribe with their kingdom extending from the river Dikhou in the east to the Kapili in the west and covering the North Cachar in the South.⁴⁰ The Kacharis never maintained any written records regarding their rule. According to traditions, they had two branches, one ruled at Sadiya and other on the south bank of the Brahmaputra with capitals at Dimapur, Maibong and Khaspur. The southern branch claimed their descent from the legendary character Ghatotkacha, son of Bhima, through the Kachari princess Hidimba. The Kacharis were Hinduised in the 16th century CE and after their conversion; stories were invented to ascribe their origin to Hindu legendary figures and give it a grand narrative of their

³⁹ S.L. Baruah, *A Comprehensive History of Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2005, p. 31.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

origin. Commenting on the beginning of the relation between the Ahoms and the Kacharis the S.L. Baruah observed as thus: ⁴¹

“The first encounter of the Kacharis with the Ahoms took place at the end of the 15th century CE. The Kacharis had defeated the Ahoms and forced them to sue for peace. But, in the year 1526 CE, Suhungmung or the Dihingia Raja had defeated the Kacharis after which they became the feudatories of the Ahoms. After, this victory by the Ahoms, the Kacharis came to be called *thapita sanchita*, that is, ‘established and preserved’ in relation to the Ahoms, which implied that they were subdued and now under their control.”

The Kacharis had organized a revolt soon after and the Ahoms organized a fresh attack, killed the Kachari king and took possession of the capital city of Dimapur. The Kacharis moved to the southern direction and established their capital on the banks of the Mahur river at Maibang.

In the beginning of the 17th century CE, Satrudaman, the Kachari king invaded the Jayantia kingdom as its king Dhana Manik had seized the Dimarua chief, who was a tributary to the Kacharis. Dhana Manik was defeated in the war and compelled to give two of his daughters in marriage to the Kachari king. Further, he was forced to hand over Jasa Manik, the heir apparent and nephew to the Kachari king as a hostage. The Kachari king Satrudaman assumed the title *Asimardan* after this strategic victory. But, very soon the Jayantia king Dhana Manik died, therefore, Jasa Manik was released by Satrudaman and he was made the king of Jayantia kingdom on condition that he would recognize the overlordship of the Kachari king. The terms were humiliating for Jasa Manik, and he was determined to overthrow the vassalage of the Kachari kingdom. With this in mind, Jasa Manik offered his daughter to the Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603-

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

1643 CE), with the condition that the bride will have to be carried away through the Kachari kingdom. The Kachari king Satrudaman rejected the proposal of taking the Jayantia princess *via* his kingdom. This resulted in a clash between the Ahoms and the Kacharis. At first the Ahoms managed to do as they planned, but subsequently, they were defeated by the Kacharis near Raha. The Kachari King Satrudaman⁴² celebrated the victory by assuming the title Pratap Narayan and changing the name of the capital from Maibong to Kirtipur.

The oral traditions narrate that Suinat Singha who founded the Mayong kingdom in the 16th century CE was the brother of the Kachari king Satrudaman whose line of family ruled at Dimapur or Maibong. It is said that on reaching Mayong hill he preferred to stay there at first, though in course of time, he shifted to the plains. There are myths which identify the first place of settlement as Khargharijan in Nagaon district. He also brought more families to the place since it was sparsely populated. The place by the side of the Mayong hill which is supposed to have been the place where Suinat Singha first settled came to be known as Burhamayong, from the previous name of *Bargaon*. The plains' area to which he had shifted in search of a more convenient place came to be known as *Dekamayong* which later was renamed Rajamayong. The *Vamsawali* records that Shuinat Singha was thirty-five years of age when he brought people of different communities to settle down in the area in accordance with their professions. As described in the *Vamsawali*, thereafter, he is said to have married a maiden named Phuleshwari who was the daughter of one Jai Singha. At that time Jaysingha was ruling in the area but he had no male successor. After, the death of

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 190.

Jaysingha, Suinat Singha ascended the throne.⁴³ The coronation ceremony was held in 1538 CE and the Dimacha Kachari rule was started in the area. From, then onwards he continued to rule as the king of the new kingdom. However, after a rule of eight years, the king died due to illness in the year 1546 CE.

It is interesting to note that the Mikirs claim their association with the original royal family of Mayong. Lokendra Hazarika⁴⁴ collected the folklore from Late Lakhi Timung of Burhamayong according to which a group of cowherds from the village Burhamayong were tending their cattle on the banks of the Jiamari rivulet around noon when they noticed a boy sitting under a tree. On enquiring his identity, the boy informed them that he was a prince of the Kachari kingdom and the brother of the reigning king. The Karbi cowherds presented the young boy before the *Bangthai* (chief of the Karbis) who later took the boy to the Mayong king. The ruling king of Mayong was impressed by the charming personality of the boy and decided to give the hand of his only daughter in marriage to him. He was declared as the king and the coronation ceremony is supposed to have taken place on the banks of a rivulet called Haduk. The identity of the boy who was the youngest brother of Kachari king Satrudaman is taken to be Suinat Singha. The significance attached to this legend is that if this narration is believed, Mayong seems to have existed as a political unit prior to the advent of Suinat Singha. This would suggest that the *raja* prior to his advent belonged to the Karbi community. Therefore, Jaysingha, who was ruling in the area even before the advent of Suinat Singha, can be identified as a Karbi. However, there is no definite information in other sources regarding the claim that Suinat Singha

⁴³ Dhanya Ram Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁴⁴ Lokendra Hazarika, *op. cit.*, p. 29. Late Lakhi Timung was a prominent *Bez*, a traditional healer of Burhamayong village.

was the brother of the Kachari king Satrudaman. It may be mentioned that Satrudaman ruled in the first half of the 17th century CE and fought a war with the Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603-1643 CE), and this period differs from the *Vamsawali* records which gives the tenure of Shuinat Singha in the first half the 16th century CE.

Suinat Singha left behind three descendents viz; Muhit Singha, Moniram Singha and Sharascha Singha. It was observed that the descendents of the Kachari kings in the area came to be known as Koches in a subsequent period.⁴⁵ Muhit Singha,⁴⁶ the elder son of Shuinat Singha ascended the throne after the death of his father. He created the posts of two *dekarajas* for the first time and appointed Sarumon and Muhiram Deka to assist him in running the affairs of the kingdom. The king was known to be lazy and pleasure loving and did not look after the welfare of the people. The *Vamsawali* records that he was terminated from his office by his subjects.⁴⁷ The successor to the throne was Moniram Singha who was popular for his welfare schemes which he undertook for the subjects. Krishna Singh who ruled the kingdom after him was also a benevolent ruler and during his reign many welfare schemes such as those related to agricultural economy was initiated. He also adopted some measures to ease the problem of collecting drinking water from far off places.⁴⁸ Large ponds were dug for the purpose but before it could be implemented, the king died of cholera in

⁴⁵ Tarani Singha Raja, “*Mayongar Aitihashik Thaan Samuh*”, Cited in Maniratna Deka (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 24- 26.

⁴⁶ Paban Kumar Bishaya, *A Study of the History and Administrative Setup of Mayong Kingdom*, (Unpublished Minor Research Project), University Grants Commission, North Eastern Regional Office, Guwahati, 2015, p. 31.

⁴⁷ Lokendra Hazarika, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁴⁸ *Vamsawali*, The genealogy of the Mayong Kingdom, p. 16.

the year 1562 CE.⁴⁹ At the time of his sudden demise, he left two minor sons *viz*; Kamaleshwar Singha and Dadhi Singha.

Ananta Singha, the brother of the deceased king Krishna Singha ascended the throne as the two sons of Krishna Singha were minor. It may be noted that the decision of kingship was taken by courtiers such as Bishaya, Bangthai, Patar, Medhi etc. The fate of the new ruler took a turn when the *dekarajas*, who were supported by Muhit Singha was engaged in a struggle for power. Sarumon Dekaraja who not agreeable to the accession of Ananta Singha as king of Mayong planned to get rid of the new ruler and it is said he killed him by poisoning his food. Ananta Singha ruled merely for a year. This was the first murder of its kind in the history of the royal family of Mayong. Shingiram Singha⁵⁰ who took over the reins of the kingdom in 1564 CE was vigilant due to the suspicious nature of Sarumon Dekaraja.⁵¹ To get rid of the hurdle, Shingiram Singha murdered Sarumon Dekaraja with some of his faithful followers. The *Vamsawali* is silent about the activities of the king. After reigning for about eight years, he died at 1571 CE. Kamaleshwar Singha having ascended the throne, a new *dekaraja* was appointed. Rashik Deka, the new *dekaraja* now assisted the king in administrative affairs along with Muhiram *dekaraja* as he was still alive. Kamaleshwar Singha was known for his fondness of hunting and the *Vamsawali* mentions the king's activities as an adventurer who took keen interest in protecting the agricultural fields from wild elephants. The hunting expeditions of Kamaleshwar Singha were accompanied by the two *dekarajas*. The throne passed on to his brother Dadhi Singha who was chosen again by the courtiers of

⁴⁹ Lokendra Hazarika, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

⁵⁰ *Vamsawali*, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁵¹ Lokendra Hazarika, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

the dynasty. The records mention that he could not show any administrative capabilities and also did not rule for long due to his premature death.

The new king Soniram Singha was known as an efficient king. For the convenience of his subjects, he had adopted a project of road construction to connect the plains' area of the kingdom with the hilly areas. The result was a convenient communication route between the Burhamayong and Rajamayong. The newly constructed road served the interest of the farmers as it worked as an embankment during the time of flood. He also had another road constructed from Rajamayong to the Kholabhuyan area which had facilitated a convenient communication between the central and eastern part of the kingdom.⁵² To deal with the problem of drinking water, a large pond was dug under his direct supervision and the pond came to be known as *Koli Pukhuri* as it is said that it was excavated in the evening time when the daylight had faded. The find of another pond at Barhampur exemplifies public welfare schemes implemented during the reign of Soniram Singha.

Sarascha Singha⁵³ ascended the throne when he was about 65 years and ruled for around twenty-five years.⁵⁴ In consultation with the courtiers, he appointed his son Prema Singha as the *Saruraja* (crown prince) and gave him the responsibility to look after the administration. The crown prince was entrusted to maintain the diplomatic affairs apart from maintaining the defense of the kingdom. After ascending the throne, the king went to Navadwip for religious

⁵² Lokendra Hazarika, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

⁵³ D.R. Roy, *A Study of History of Mayong with Special Reference to the Archaeological Remains in Mayong*, (Unpublished M. Phil Dissertation), Department of History, Vinayaka Missions University, Salem, Tamilnadu, 2009, p. 22.

⁵⁴ Lokendra Hazarika, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

pilgrimage with his son Prema Singha and he is said to have brought ten images of deities such as like Basudeba, Gopal, Lakshinarayan, Siva, Salagrama etc on his return to the kingdom. He decided that these deities should be worshipped by all his subjects in his kingdom. He offered three images to three devoted people of the Yogi community and appointed them as *Medhis*,⁵⁵ These three persons were entrusted with the task to taking care of three divine images by performing the religious rituals. The other images were kept by the king himself. He declared as a rule that any kind of deficiency in the maintenance of the deities would be considered as sin and it was the wish of their predecessors, hence irrevocable. The three *Medhis* appointed were Dandadhar Nath, Gohin Nath, and Tularam Nath. He decided to celebrate the *Gohain Uliua Utsav* every year from the fourth day to the sixth day of the month of *Bahag* (April-May) of the Assamese calendar year. Sarascha Singha organized the administrative structure of his kingdom by appointing some more officials *viz*; Patar (Prime Minister),⁵⁶ *Patar Senapati* (Commander-in-chief), *Bangthai* (advisor), and one *Karbi Thakuria* from the Karbi tribe residing in Burhamayong village. Moreover, there were three *Medhis*, two *Katani Barua* and one *Barua* from the Yogi community. Further, appointment was made for three *Bishayas* from the Koch community; and one *Bishaya* and three *Thakurias* from the Hira community. Prem Singha⁵⁷ ascended the throne after the death of his father in 1615 CE and he initiated some steps to improve the condition of the religious places situated in the kingdom. The next king Govinda Singha is known for having dug the biggest pond called *Bamun Pukhuri* during his rule at Hatimuria village. It was completed within a period of

⁵⁵ *Vamsawali, op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁵⁶ Dhanya Ram Roy, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

⁵⁷ *Vamsawali, op. cit.*, p. 45.

six months. The next ruler Keshab Singha also continued the water works with the digging of the *Daria Pukhuri*. Bidit Singha, the next king continued the welfare projects initiated by his predecessors. Bhem Singha dug a pond for drinking water in the eastern side of the Rajamayong village but unfortunately due to the death of two cows by drowning in the pond, it was left unused by the people. When Kritti Singha succeeded to the throne of Mayong, he constructed a rampart on the south-west corner of the rivulet Amaramur for the purpose of trapping elephants.

Amar Singha, the brother of Kritti Singha ascended the throne in 1655 CE.⁵⁸ As recorded in the *Vamsawali* he had issued land grants to the *paiks*, which indicates the influence of the Ahom system of administration over the Mayong kingdom. He is said to have captured ten elephants at Hatigarh, released four of them, offered four to the Ahom king and kept two for his own use. In return the Ahom king sent a golden crown and two golden coins to Amar Singha. Nakul Singha as the new king was inattentive towards the administrative affairs of the state, and soon he was replaced by Bhagadatta Singha. The mention of the death of the priest of the royal family Shantadhan Sharma and his succession by his son shows that the king was advised and guided by a religious head in the administrative affairs of the kingdom. During the reign of Bhagdutta Singha, the worship of the deity *Mal Devata* was initiated and a pond was constructed in the village Gobhali in connection with the festival. The king also appointed Santaram Mikir as his advisor (*Bangthai*). Gopal Chandra Singha⁵⁹ also appears as a religious king since he established different shrines (*thans*) in the kingdom and a

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁵⁹ Dhanya Ram Roy, *op.cit.*, p. 29.

royal priest also helped in the functioning of religious matters. Ranjit Singha,⁶⁰ the brother of the former king Gopal Chandra Singha ascended the throne in 1689 CE. He worshipped five deities and ensured the regular celebration of the religious festivals. Sukumon Nath was appointed as *Medhi* during his reign. The next king, Mahat Singha appointed his son Kolaram Nath as the Medhi. Siva Singha's reign records the appointment of Patar and a Medhi. Chandit Singha was fond of catching elephant and also reconstructed the rampart at Hatigarh.

The reign of Balit Narayan Singha,⁶¹ the younger brother of Chandit Singha witnessed improvement in agricultural economy. He attempted to expand the boundaries of his kingdom. He moved in the eastern direction with eight of his courtiers. In the western region of Nagaon, he appointed seven *dekarajas* at Chamua Gaon, Kakomari, Kachadhara, Barangabari, Barapujia, Topakuchi and Khaigor.⁶² Further, moving in the eastern direction, he appointed another five *dekarajas* at Dandua, Baghara, Kumoi, Sukhuanagug and Ghagua.⁶³ Amrit Singha ascended the throne in 1719 CE and added the administrative officer *Baion* (In-charge of musical instruments) in his administration. One Muni Nath was appointed to the post. Bhogali Singha, the son of Chandit Singha ascended the throne after the death of Amrit Singha. He appointed Gunaram Hira as the Thakuria after the death of Chutiman Hira. After the death of Kalaram Daria Hira, one Garia Hira was appointed to the post of Thakuria.⁶⁴ The next ruler was Padmaram Singha who carried on the works of his predecessor. During the reign of Luhit Singha, there is a record of the celebration of the traditional Maroi Puja

⁶⁰ Lokendra Hazarika, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁶² Dhanya Ram Roy, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Lokendra Hazarika, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

in Lehpati village. Kularam Singha who ascended the throne in 1748 CE set out for pilgrimage on foot and returned after three months. Lakhiram Singha ascended the throne in 1758 CE after the death of his father. The reign of Pratap Narayan Singha started the use of palanquin by the king to be carried by the *paiks* and in return the king rewarded them with land grants for their services. The importance attached to traditional religious beliefs and customs is indicated when the cause of the death of the king was attributed to shortcomings committed in the traditional Maroi Puja celebrated at Lehpati. It is said that Bana Singh stopped the celebration of the traditional *Maroi Puja*. The *Vamsawali* then explains that during his rule the Mayong kingdom was lost to the British.

During the colonial period of Assam history, Narayan Singha⁶⁵ was deputed as the Mauzadar of the area by the British and was asked to keep one fourth of the total revenue collected from the Mouza. A.J. Moffat Mills⁶⁶ mentioned that Narayan Singha had to pay a sum of Rs 2457 as revenue to the British. The king was assisted by *Cagottee* (1) and *Teeklah* (5).⁶⁷ But, after few years due to some conflict with the authority, the Mouza was suspended from him and it was entrusted to Kali Singha Dekaraja of Baghara kingdom. The successors of Narayan Singha, viz; Bakat Singha, Rahan Singha, and Baneshwar Singha ruled Mayong without any significant changes. During the reign of Baneshwar, the royal priest Joydev Sharma died without leaving any male successor and no priest was appointed after him. Minaram Singha's reign is

⁶⁵ Ribu Deka and Umakanta Dekaraja, "Assam Sahitya Sabhar Jagi Bhakatgaon Sakhar Antargata Gaon Samuhaar namar Etibritya", in Utpal Sarma (ed.), *Jagi Bhakatgaon Anchalar Lokasanskriti (A Collection of article of Folklore by Jagi Bhakatgaon Sakha Sahitya Sabha)*, Jagibhakatgaon, Morigaon, 2007, p. 14.

⁶⁶ A.J. Moffatt Mills, *Report on the Province of Assam*, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati, 1984, (Second Edition), p. 479.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

remembered for large scale land erosion caused by the Brahmaputra river. The villages affected included: Sagunpuri, Sialtari, Ujatari, Kalatali, Barhoitari, Mantari, Pakariguri, Saapmari, Katahaguri, Pakariamukh, Eporia were completely lost due to the erosion. During his reign schools, library, post office were established. Ghanakanta Singha, and Taranikanta Singh were nominated as titular king of Mayong, the last having been given the title in 2005 CE.

II

The king was the fountain head of the monarchical form of government in Mayong and the administrative system was expanded from time to time since the founding of the kingdom in the 16th century CE. The *Vamsawali* refers to different types of officials, who had assisted the king in the decision making process. Suinot Singha, the founder of the kingdom settled many families from various ethnic groups with particular professions which must have helped in the establishment of the new kingdom. It was his son Muhit Singha (1547-1554 CE) who had appointed two *dekarajas* and introduced a decentralized power system for the first time. This tradition is followed symbolically by the present titular king of Mayong, Tarani Kanta Singha who also appointed two *dekarajas viz*, Konwar Singha and Braja Deka of the Hatimuria village. An important aspect of Mayong political organization was the democratic feature of the kings consulting his officials in adopting any important decision. In fact there are instances which indicate that the officials played a major role in appointing the king when a natural succession was absent. The king was then chosen by them from among the competent members of the royal family. The kingship strictly followed the male line as there was no female ruler mentioned in the *vamsawali*. The

patriarchal set-up of the kingdom is also known from the fact that no female was appointed as officials of the administrative system.

The king was not an absolute ruler as the officials could mandate on removing him if he proved unworthy of the position. King Muhit Singha (1547-1554 CE) was forced to abdicate the throne in favour of Moniram Singha, for his moral degradation and debauchery. The coronation ceremony was observed by the Dimacha Kachari family. It took place on the banks of the Haduk rivulet, in which the royal priest was the functionary. The ritual involved pouring on him the holy water collected from seven rivers which may be symbolic of the territorial expanse of the kingdom indicated by the geography of the rivers. The use of local rice beer in this ceremony was continued till the accession of Sarascha Singha, though it was discontinued later, possibly on account of the growing impact of Neo-Vaisnavism on the ruling dynasty of Mayong. Some of the important posts created in the kingdom over the years include *dekaraja*, *Patar* (Prime Minister), *Bangthai* (advisor), *Karbi Thakuria* (priest), *Bishayas* (assistant in royal household), Chamua, Barika, Katani Baruah, and Medhi etc.

The *Datiyalia* Buranji deals with the relation of the Ahoms with the kings of Jayantia and Cachar and with the chieftains of Gobha, Neli, Sora, Khahigaria, Topakuchia, Barepujia, Dandua and Mikir.⁶⁸ The chronicle also discussed about the two military outposts at Raha Chawki under Rohiyal Barua and the Jagi Chawki under the Jagialia Gohain.⁶⁹ The Ahom King Suhungmung or the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 CE) was ruling in the eastern part of the Brahmaputra Valley when Suinot Singha had started his rule at Mayong in the central part of

⁶⁸ S.K. Bhuyan (ed.), *Deodhai Asam Buranji*, DHAS, Guwahati, 2001, (Fourth Edition), p. (xvii).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

the Brahmaputra Valley. The Mayong *Vamsawali* gives a description of a meeting between Prem Singha, the crown prince of Mayong with the Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603-1641 CE). There is a reference to a gift of a palanquin to the king of Mayong from the Ahom king. However, the *Buranjis* or Ahom chronicles do not make note of it. The *Vamsawali* gives us information about the exchange of gifts between the ruling kings of Mayong with the Ahoms. Amar Singha, the ruler of Mayong (1665- 1672 CE) gifted four elephants to the Ahom king. It could also have been a tribute given to the Ahoms, since Mayong was a vassal state at that time.

In 1497 CE Suhungmung or the Dihingia Raja had ascended the Ahom throne and the campaigns started by him played a major role in the political unification of the Brahmaputra valley. He tried to expand his territory in the western direction and came into conflict with the Kacharis. They were engaged into several clashes and in 1536 CE the Kacharis were defeated and ousted from the Dhansiri valley to Maibong. Suhungmung extended his sway up to the Kajalimukh in the west.⁷⁰ Susengpha or Pratap Singha (1603-1641 CE) tried to maintain friendly relations with the Jayantias living in the hilly region and to enhance this; the Ahom ruler entered into a matrimonial alliance with them and married a Jayantia princess.⁷¹ As an outcome of this development Jasa Manik, the Jaintia King obtained some land with the river Kalong as the boundary for establishing a market at Phulaguri. According to S.L. Baruah this had necessitated the creation of new frontier offices at Jagi and two others at

⁷⁰ H.K. Barpujari, *TCHA*, Vol. -II, Publication Board Assam, Guwahati, 2016, (Fourth Edition), p. 136.

⁷¹ The Ahom king Pratap Singha is credited with his contribution towards making Assamese language as *lingua franca*. See Rekhamoni Borah, *Ahom Sargodewsakal*, Sivasagar, 2010, p. 44.

Kajalimukh. The office at Jagi was maintained by Jagialia Gohain and he was made responsible to inform the Ahom king about the movements and activities of the Jayantia king. The two other offices were established at Kajalimukh under the control of the Kajalimukhiya Gohains. They were made responsible to keep a close surveillance over the Jayantias and the king of Dimarua. In 1618 CE, Dimarua became a protected state under the Ahoms.⁷² Explaining the importance of the office of the Kajalimukhiya Gohain, Francis Hamilton⁷³ observed as thus: “the Kajolimukh (Kajolimukh A) Gohain has 1000 *paiks*, and some guns, and lives at Kajalichauki in the west end of the same island; and lands are allotted to his people in the vicinity. The object of the force seems to be to guard against the encroachment of the Kacharis and Jaintias”. Moreover, this office functioned independently without any intervention from the Governor at Gauhati. In this context, Hamilton added that, “...although surrounded by the territory that is placed under the governor of Gohati and stationed near that place, both he and his people are entirely independent of that officer.”⁷⁴ Both the *chawkis* (military outposts) were established at the boundary of the kingdom of Mayong; the Jagi *Chawki* at the eastern boundary of Mayong on the banks of the Kalong river, and the Kajoli *Chawki* at the western boundary of Mayong on the banks of Kalong river. Explaining the importance of the office at Jagi, Hamilton noted that, “...the Jagil (Jaji and Jagi A) Gohain lives on the Kolong and just such another military officer as the Kajoli Gohain. He is equally independent of the governor of

⁷² S.L. Baruah, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

⁷³ Francis Hamilton, *An Account of Assam*, DHAS, Guwahati, Assam, 1987, (Third Impression), p. 39.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Kamrup and his object is to guard against the Kacharis.”⁷⁵ The two officers were appointed from any family of the Hatimuriyas. It may be mentioned that Kajalimukh which was positioned at the confluence of the rivers Kalong and Brahmaputra was a strategic military post which could keep close surveillance of any movements in the area. The civil and revenue affairs of the area were administered by these two officials whose duty was to look after the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom.

While crossing the Kalong river from Mayong, a range of small foothills start that meets with the Khasia Jaintia hills. There are several passes to enter into the Khasia Jaintia hills in the southern direction of Mayong. These passes were used to maintain commercial relations between the people living in the hills with those in the plains. Such passes are still found in the boundary of Morigaon and Kamrup District of Assam that connects with the Ri Bhoi district of Meghalaya. Hence, these two outposts established at the boundary of Mayong were beneficial for the Ahoms for monitoring the movements of the Jaintias. While discussing about the protection of the boundary of Ahom kingdom from the attack of the hill people S.K. Bhuyan⁷⁶ observed that, “...the frontiers of the kingdom were protected from inroads of the hill people by several wardens, the Sadiya-Khowa Gohain, the Marangi- Khowa Gohain, the Solal Gohain, the Jagialia Gohain and the Kajalimukhiya Gohain, and they were always selected from the families of the three Gohains at the metropolis.”

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ S.K. Bhuyan, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

The Ahom-Mughal clashes in the 17th century CE is a landmark in the history of Assam.⁷⁷ The Kajali Chawki has always played crucial role in the Ahom Mughal wars. The Mughals were interested in the natural resources of Assam. Moreover, they had a vision to expand their boundary towards South East Asia. The Mughal traders entered into the Ahom territory which was opposed by the Ahoms as they were not interested to enhance trade relations with the Mughals. On the other hand Mughals were interested in the natural resources of the territory under the Ahoms such as aloe wood (*aqularia malaccensis*), medicinal plants, musk, ivory, tobacco, pepper, silk and cereals etc. As a result of the opposition from the Ahoms, the Mughal traders were involved into illegal commercial practices. Such illegal trade practices alarmed the Ahom ruler.

The first clash between the Ahoms and Mughals occurred due to an illegal commercial incident by a merchant named Ratan Shah for purchasing aloe wood for Emperor Jahangir at a place called Singri within the Ahom territory. The businessman was expelled and his commodities were confiscated. There were other instances of a few more illegal traders who were arrested north of Kajali while purchasing some agricultural products. Two illegal traders from Bengal were killed and two vassals were confiscated. The Mughal government at Bengal had decided to take revenge for the murder of these two traders and send an expedition against the Ahoms. The governor of Bengal Sheikh Qasim Khan had sent the expedition under the leadership of Sayyid Aba Baqr. The army of the invader was consisted of more than ten thousand infantry and cavalry, two hundred musketeers and a flotilla of three hundred or four hundred war boats.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ S.L. Baruah, *op. cit.*, pp. 241-242.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

Besides, Raja Satrajit and Jamal Khan Menkali were there among the other imperial officers. The invaders started from Bajrapur in Bengal in March 1616 CE and reached Kajalimukh in May/ June of the same year. The contemporary Ahom ruler was Pratap Singha (1603-1641 CE). During this crucial period, Prem Singha had ascended the throne of Mayong after the death of Sarascha Singha. The Ahom army was prepared at Kajali to resist the invaders. However, the Ahom navy lost several boats and they were compelled to retreat from Kajali Chawki. The Ahom defenders with three thousand war boats were surprised due to the sudden attack and started to retreat by leaving most of their boats.

The easy occupation over the military camp at Kajali was followed by subsequent plundering raids. Raja Satrajit entered Sala by advancing through Kalong and plundered a royal store. Thereafter, he crossed the Brahmaputra and plundered the temple of Bishwanath and sailed off. The Ahoms had been observing the progress of the Mughals and they concentrated to strengthen the camp of Chamdhara, near the confluence of Brahmaputra and Bharali river. The Mughal forces advanced up to the Bharali and stationed on the right bank of Bharali. Meanwhile, after about a month, the Mughal camp was attacked by the Ahoms at night and killed Sayyid Aba Baqr with few other military officers. Raja Satrajit, Miran Sayyid Masaud and Sona Ghazi had a narrow escape with their boats. According to the Baharistan-i- Ghaybi, the losses in man and materials for the Mughals were quite extensive as about seventeen hundred men were killed on the spot. Three thousand four hundred died of wounds later after the escape, nine hundred men taken as captives and about three thousand half- dead concealed.⁷⁹ On the other hand the Ahoms gained a large booty of guns, war boats, horses,

⁷⁹ H.K. Barpujari, *TCHA*, Vol. III, p. 152.

elephants and other war materials. It increased the status of the Ahoms and further consolidated their position in this region. The entire tract between Barnadi and Bharali came under their control. The Ahom king Pratap Singha appointed Balinarayan (1615- 1637 CE) as the tributary king of Darrang. Thus the Ahom-Mughal hostility started during the reign of Pratap Singha continued with certain short intervals. Due to the strategic location of the site, Kajali remained an important military camp for the Ahoms. The cannonballs discovered in the area are still there on the site unexplored. It may be mentioned that the Ahom king Pratap Singha created two outposts to look into the affairs of the kingdom and Laangi Panisia was appointed as the first Barphukan or governor of conquered territories west of Kaliabor with headquarters at Kajoli in the western boundary of Mayong. The region east of Kaliabor was put under the control of another officer named Barbarua and Momai Tamuli was appointed as the first Barbarua.⁸⁰

Captain Welsh (1792-1794 CE) visited Assam and initiated a meeting of the *rajas* and other important individuals in Assam for the purpose of putting an end to their dissensions and to restore good governance and peace in the region. The *rajas* who were invited include those of Rani, Luki, Beltola, Barduar, Duar, Mairapur, Pantan, Bholagaon, Nellie, Dimarua, Bagaduar, Sohari, Gobha, Dandua, Barapujia, Khaigarh, Sara, Tapakuchi, Panbari, Mayong, Tetelia, Salmara, Dhing, Garakhia, Baghara and Bhurbandha. However, only three out of these chiefs, that is of Beltola, Rani and Darrang expressed their willingness to attend the meeting. The king of Dimarua was ready to accept the conditions

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, p. 245.

agreed by the other three *rajas*.⁸¹ The king of Mayong thus did not participate in the meeting convened by Captain Welsh.

The kingdom of Dimarua had an important role to play in safeguarding the kingdom of Mayong. The Dimarua kingdom was surrounded by the kingdoms of Gobha in the east, Beltola in the west, Mayong in the north and by Jayantia in the south.⁸² Dimarua was surrounded by the Ahoms, Koches, Kacharis and Jayantias and frequently influenced by the political changes which were experienced by the neighboring kingdoms.⁸³ In fact, the Dimarua kingdom was a buffer zone between the Ahoms and the Jayantia hills. It was the largest among all the vassal kingdoms under the Ahoms.⁸⁴ The strategic position of Dimarua may be understood in the words as expressed by Francis Hamilton⁸⁵ as thus: “Dumuria (Demooroo wood) lives beyond Beltoli towards the Garo mountains. In fact he is a Garo Chief and the present occupant is supposed to know many powerful incantations, by which he can kill his enemies, or at least render them foolish. On this account he is very much respected and the governor of the province carefully avoids giving him any manner of offence.” Dimarua along with other petty kingdoms was to come under the British rule in the modern history of Assam.

Dimarua played a key role in guarding Mayong against attacks by hill tribes as it was a buffer zone between Mayong and the Jayantia hills. Both Dimarua and Mayong maintained cordial relations although it had deteriorated

⁸¹ S.K. Bhuyan, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

⁸² Deben Baruah, “*Dimoria Rajyar Samriddha Atit Parikrama*”, cited in Jitendra Mohan Sarma and Deben Baruah (ed.), *Parkhali*, Dimoria Raja Gharia Parisalona Committee, Bamfor, Dimoria, Assam, 2017, p. 1.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁸⁴ Hatem Ali, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁸⁵ Francis Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

for a short period of time.⁸⁶ One such incident took place in the 16th century CE and it involved the Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603-1641 CE). King Sarascha Chandra Singha of Mayong and King Prabhakar Singha of Dimarua were summoned by the Ahom king to Gauhati.⁸⁷ The king of Mayong sent his son Prem Chandra Singha whereas the king of Dimarua sent the crown prince Prabhut Singha to the Ahom court. They were asked by the Ahom king to provide certain number of *paiks* to them. The crown prince of Mayong had expressed his inability to provide the same at that time. However, instead of taking any stern decision against the prince of Mayong, the Ahom king expresses his keenness to maintain a friendly relation with the Mayong kingdom. Further, the Ahom king offered to gift a palanquin or *kekura dula* to the prince of Mayong and asked him to receive it after three days. All these discussions were heard by Prabhut Singha, the crown prince of Dimarua. On the day fixed for handing over the palanquin by the Ahoms to Mayong, some emissaries from Dimarua received the palanquin by concealing their actual identity. When the people sent by Prem Chandra Singha of Mayong reached Gauhati, they were surprised to find out that the palanquin was already taken away by someone else. The Ahom king offered another palanquin (*charia dula*) to the king of Mayong as a gift and sent his army to apprehend Prabhut Singha. But, the crown prince of Dimarua had already fled away to the forest and the Ahom army could not arrest him. This incident had embittered the relation between Dimarua and Mayong which resulted in a war between the two neighboring kingdoms. But, gradually, the mutual relation

⁸⁶ Personal interview with Holisingh Rahang, 50 yrs, Titular king of Dimarua Kingdom, Bamphar, Khetri, Kamrup on 06/01/2018.

⁸⁷ Lokendra Hazarika, “*Madhyajugia Dimarua aru Mayong Rajyar major samparka aru Sanghatar Sabisesesh*,” cited in Jitendra Mohan Sarma and Deben Baruah (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 34.

between the two kingdoms improved and one of the princesses of the royal family of Mayong named Aikon Konwari was also married to the Dimarua king Sershing.⁸⁸

Mayong maintained friendly relations with many other petty kingdoms of the Brahmaputra valley such as that of Beltola which was ruled by the Koches. Francis Hamilton⁸⁹ observed as thus: “Beltola is of the same family with the Raja of Darrang: that is, he is a Koch claims descent from the god Siva, and is in fact descended of Raja Sukladhwaj, who was sovereign of the country. On this account he is much respected. He lives in Beltoli, (Belletolah wood), a few miles east and south from Gohati.” During the reign of Lokpal Narayan Deb the status of Beltola was changed from a kingdom to that of a revenue circle or Mouza and the ruler was designated as the Mauzadar. It may be mentioned that Lokpal Narayan Dev married Padmavati Devi or Padumi and she was a princess of the kingdom of Mayong.⁹⁰ This indicates that the kingdoms maintained a good relation. Lokpal Narayan Dev died in 1863 CE and was succeeded by his son Amrit Narayan Dev.

The people of Mayong joined in India’s freedom struggle. During the second half of the 20th century CE world witnessed the devastating effect of the First World War. Indian people had to suffer a lot even though India was not directly involved in the war. The contemporary political scenario of the country compelled the leaders of the Indian National Congress to review their policy towards the British. Some of the important events of the freedom struggle that

⁸⁸ Personal interview with Holisingh Rahang, 50 yrs, Titular king of Dimarua Kingdom, Bamphor, Khetri, Assam, on 06/01/2018.

⁸⁹ Francis Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

⁹⁰ [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/History-of Beltola](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/History-of_Beltola); Accessed on 14/08/2018.

had an impact on the anti-British sentiments include: the Montague-Chelmsford reforms of 1919 CE, the Khilafat movement for protection of the Ottoman Empire, and the Jallianwalabagh tragedy of 1919 CE, and the non-cooperation movement of 1920 CE. It may be mentioned that prior to the Revolt of 1857, Maniram Dewan had organized a meeting at Raha in which the petty kings of central Assam were invited to attend the meeting. The king of Mayong along with the *Saturaja* (seven kings) and *Pachuraja* (five kings) attended the meeting.⁹¹

On 19 August, 1942 a public meeting was held at Jagi Bhakatgaon under the auspices Nagaon district congress committee. Mahendranath Hazarika⁹² (Ex. president of the Nagaon District Congress Committee), Priyanath Barthakur, Dharmanath Barthkur, Ahinaram Konwar, Harakanta Barkakati, Mahadananda Dev Goswami, Layaram Medhi had attended the meeting. The persons who had attended the meeting disseminated the message of anti British campaign launched by Mahatma Gandhi.⁹³ During the meeting it was decided to establish a sub - committee at Mayong. Mahadananda Dev Goswami was deputed as the President of this sub - committee. Harakanta Barkakati, Ahinaram Konwar, Layaram Medhi, Padmeswar Bordoloi, Baneswar Singha (king of Mayong), Minaram Singha (younger brother of king), Harichandra Gogoi, Medaram Nath, Mahendra Bishaya, Bhuban Chandra Medhi, Holiram Deka, Sitaram Bishaya, Dhiraj Bishaya, Harakumar Bishaya were some the active members of the Mayong

⁹¹ Guneswar Deka, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

⁹² Dhanya Ram Roy, *A Study of the History of Mayang with Special Reference to the Archaeological Remains in Mayang*, (Unpublished M. Phil Dissertation), Department of History, Vinayaka Missions University, Salem, Tamilnadu, 2009, p. 60.

⁹³ Mahadananda Dev Goswami, *Panbarir Railgari Bagaruar Ittibrittaya*, Shri Shri Paramnanda Grantha Prakashan (No. 4), 1995, (First Edition), pp. 29-31.

Congress Committee. The leaders of Nagaon District Congress committee played a key role for constituting the *Shantisena Bahini* in remote areas of the district. Guluk Chandra Goswami was entrusted as the Deputy Commander in chief of the *Shantisena Bahini* for western Nagaon. He had two other associates with him viz, Madha Keot & Dadhiram Bordoloi.⁹⁴

With the objective of spreading the spirit of freedom struggle in the area training camps were launched at the Mayong M.E. School. After successful completion of the program, a procession was organized from the School to Kajalimukh. After the completion of the training session at Mayong ME School, Benudhar Deka, member of the Nagaon district *Shanti Sena Bahini* announced that a suicide squad would be set up in area.⁹⁵ Regarding the volunteer camps of Assam, Priyam Goswami observed, “By 1943, there were as many as 32 underground volunteer camps at Bajali alone. Similar camps were also organised at different places of Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong and Sibsagar districts...the main activity of the underground movement was the disruption of communication network by blowing up bridges, derailing trains and cutting telephone and telegraph wires”.⁹⁶

The suicide squad was constituted of Dadhiram Bordoloi, Bhogram Deka, Mahadananda Dev Goswami, Bikram Deka, Dinaram Medhi, Madhu Keot, Layaram Medhi, Birahu Medhi, Bhuban Medhi and Benudhar Deka. The list was submitted to the Nagaon District Congress Committee. Lakhmi Prasad Goswami,

⁹⁴ D.R. Roy, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁹⁵ G. Deka, “*Bharatar Swadhinata Jujat Mayangia Raijar Bhumika*”, in Utpal Nath (ed.) *Kalshila (A Souvenir of the 12th biennial conference of Morigaon Jila Sahitya Sabha) held at Mayong*, 2010, pp. 21-27.

⁹⁶ Priyam Goswami, *The History of Assam (From Yandaboo to partition 1826- 1947)*, Orient BlackSwan, 2013, (Reprint), p. 270.

Officer- in- Charge of the *Shanti Sena Bahini* of Nagaon district sent emissaries to Mayong with a secret mission. A letter was sent to Mahadananda Dev Goswami, the president of Mayong Sub Congress Committee. The Confidential message appealed to take initiative for derailing train.⁹⁷ The leaders like Manik Bora, Bhibiram Bora, Dhanpur Laskar, Bhogram Bordoloi, Dadhiram Bordoloi, Madhu Keot and Layaram Medhi had attended a confidential session for chalk out a plan. According to the plan already fixed Mahadananda Goswami and his associates started their mission. They took shelter at the Amlung *ashram* in the Hahara area of Kamrup district. Mahendra Hazarika had sent another three persons viz., Kameswar Bordoloi, Benudhar Deka and Rupram Sut to join the group at the *ashram*. On 24th November, 1942, at around 6.30 PM, they started to remove the fish plates of the railway track near Panbari at Kamrup district. Thus, the underground workers had accomplished the train accident in which several persons had died including the driver. Thus Mayong was an important centre of political activities during India's freedom struggle.

The *Vamsawali* and *Buranjis* are important sources for the reconstruction of the history of Mayong. The transition from a monarchical administrative set-up to a revenue circle came about through various political developments in the medieval and modern periods of Assam history. The early history is not certain and oral traditions reveal that the inhabitants comprised various ethnic communities of central Assam such as the Karbis, Koches, Yogis, Mikirs, Kalitas etc. The Kacharis are central to the narration of the myths and legends of Mayong. It may be mentioned that myths are a reflection of the collective memory of people although a comparative study of the versions must be

⁹⁷ Mahadananda Dev Goswami, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

undertaken to arrive at any plausible conclusion. In the case of Mayong, the society experienced cross-cultural interactions among the many ethnic groups inhabiting the petty kingdoms, and later with the Ahoms. Much of the history of Mayong concerns the implications of political relations with the neighboring kingdoms and the Ahom dynasty in medieval Assam. The myths of Naraka and Bhagadatta were incorporated to the dynastic history of Mayong in the wake of the influence of Brahmanical ideology which largely influenced Assam during the medieval period. The role played by Mayong in India's freedom struggle is noteworthy. Nagaon district was a hotbed of activities, and since Mayong is closely connected to the history of Nagaon, the erstwhile kingdom felt the pulse of the anti-British movements. The strategic location of Mayong must have played a crucial role in maintaining friendly relations with various political powers throughout the history of Assam.