

# An Introduction to Mayong in Historical Perspective

Dhanya Ram Roy  
Head of Deptt. of History

Mayang, an important small area in the Morigaon District of Assam, about 40 (forty) k.m. away from the capital of Assam, Dispur, is an area famous for its "Tantrism" and "Black Magic" since ancient times. At present, Mayang is only one of the Mauzas of the District of Morigaon. The land from the mighty Brahmaputra in the north to the Kollong River in the south and from the Pakaria (a rivulet) and the Manaha Beel in the east to the meeting point of the rivers Kollong-Kapili and the Brahmaputra in the west is known as Mayang.

Mayang extends roughly between 26° 15' and 21° 5' North latitude, and 91° and 93° East longitude in the western most part of the present District of Morigaon. In the medieval period of Assam history, Mayang was one of the small kingdoms of Assam, much bigger than it is now. In the medieval and modern periods of Assam history the kingdom of Mayang consisted of Manaha, Konwor Gaon, Barokata, Burha-Burhi, Chatabori, Baha, Garubandha, Kamarpur, Rajakuchi, Burha Pabhakati, Pabhakati, Lehpati, Phaliamari, Katahguri, Sonaipar, Teteliguri, Baghdubi, Sildubi, Khola Bhuyan, Hatigarh-Kuchiani, Bardia, Rajamayang, Hatimuria, Kalshilapar, Burhamayang, Gobhali, Dhekiabari, Khatargaon, Kajali, Sagunpuri, Sialtari, Ujatari, Kalatali, Barhaitari, Mantari, Chanaka, Hiloikhunda, Pakariguri, Sap-pari, Gubardhan, Khatorgaon, Gachbari and some other small villages in the area. The capital of the kingdom of Mayang was at first Burhamayang and then Rajamayang.

## ORIGIN OF THE NAME OF MAYANG

Nobody knows what the name of Mayang was in ancient times and how and when this land of "Tantrism" and "Black Magic" got its present name - "Mayang or Mayong". But since the days of the beginning of the historical period of the land, it is known as "Mayang". There are as many as eight theories about the origin of the name of Mayang. All these popular theories have been discussed in details below:-

### The First Theory:

According to this theory, Mayamatta, the son of Arimatta, the Kachari King of "Gobha Rajya", was found guilty of treason and was expelled from the kingdom. So Mayamatta fled away and took shelter in the hilly region of Mayang. At first he made his dwelling at Bangthe Bheti (now Burhamayang) as absconder. After living a few days (it may be a few years) he collected a few powerful men of this area and became their head. Gradually he brought a number of villages under his control and founded a new kingdom in this remote area. Henceforth the entire region under his control became known as "Mayang" or the kingdom founded by Mayamatta was named after his own name i.e. Mayamatta to Mayang I.

### The Second Theory

According to the Mayang Rajvamsavali, Soinatva Singha, the founder king of the Dimasa-Kachari kingdom of Mayang, came from Maibong. As Soinatva Singha came from Maibong, hence the kingdom founded by him became known as Mayang. According to this

source, Mayang is a corrupted form of the word "Maibong" i.e. Maibong > Maybong > Mayong > Mayang.

### The Third Theory

Archaeologist Rajmohan Nath says in his "The Background of Assamese Culture" that the name "Mayang" originated from the word "Mayangarh". The text reads, "Rampala, the king of Bengal, taking advantage of a weak moment of the king of Kamarupa when after Dharmapala had renounced the world and Jayapala came to the throne - he sent his general Mayan with a strong army to invade Kamarupa. Poor Jayapala was easily ousted and Mayan established a town at Kajali Mukh east of Gawahati and named it "Mayangarh" which was placed by a Buddhist Tantric emissaries. The place is now called Mayang and is still looked by the Assamese people with a disdainful owa as a centre of dangerous witchcraft.<sup>2</sup>" Thus the author wants to prove that the people of the surrounding villages omitted the ending portion of the word - "Mayan-garh" and called it only "Mayang" i.e. Mayangarh > Mayang.

It is worth mentioning here that Mayan invaded Kamarupa between 1125-1130 A.D.<sup>3</sup>

### The Forth Theory

According to this theory, in Monipuri Mehte language the word "Mayong" means "Immigrants". The Mayang Rajvamsavali (a manuscript) also states that Soinat Singha, the founder of the Dimasa-Kachari Royal Family of Mayang came from the land outside Mayang (from Maibong) and hence the Dimasa-Kachari people who accompanied Soinatva Singha introduced themselves before the aborigines of this new land (Mayang) as "Mayong" i.e. immigrants. When the power of this ruling family grew stronger and the newly established kingdom became bigger, the aborigines of this area also began to call them Mayong. Slowly the entire land under their hegemony became

known as "Mayong" > "Mayang".

### The Fifth Theory

In Tiwa language, "Miyung" means "elephant". There were plenty of elephant in the Mayang area upto the 60th of the last century. As this land was full of forest, and it was down the Khasi and Jayantia hills, so very often the elephants from these hills came down to these forest area of Mayang. Kirti Singha, the 16th Dimasa-Kachari king (1655-1664 A.D) of Mayang built a "garh" - rampart to catch the elephants. The place where this "garh" was built (near the Pabitora Wildlife Sanctuary) is still today known as "Hatigarh". So the supporters of this theory want to say that the name Mayang originated from the Tiwa word "Miyung", Mayang is corrupted form of Miyung. i.e. Miyung > Miyong > Mayong > Mayang.

### The Sixth Theory

According to the followers of "Sanatana" branch of Vaisnavism (Chaitannyaia) the name "Mayang" originated from the dual word "Mair Anga<sup>4</sup>" - a part of the body of the Mother Goddess Sati. According to this theory, when Sati Devi died at the Daksha-Yajna, Mahadeva became very much angry and took the dead body of Sati Devi on his shoulder and began to tour throughout the whole world. All the Devatas got afraid of Mahadeva's behaviour and prayed God Vishnu for a solution. Being satisfied with the prayer God Vishnu cut the body of Sati into fifty one pieces with his Sudarshan Chakra. The places where Sati Devi's "anga" - parts of the body fell became famous for pilgrim centres. The supporters of this theory believe that the Janu Anga (thigh) of Sati Devi fell on the Mayang Hill (near Burhamayang). The place where the part of Sati fell is called by the people of Mayang as "Kamakhya Dham". A stone "Monikut" symbolizing the Dham is there at Burhamayang, a few feet above the Barghat Stream.

Sati Devi was an incarnation of Mahamaya, the Mother Goddess, "Mai" is a corrupted form of "Maa", spoken generally by the village folks. So, as "Mair-anga" fell in this land, the entire region became known as Mayang, i.e., Mair Anga>Maiyong>Mayyong>Mayang.

#### The seventh theory

According to this theory, Kamakhya Devi of Nilachal Hill occasionally comes to this beautiful land for doing illusion-"Maya" or "Lila". Every year Devi comes to her abode at Kamakhya Dham, situated on the Mayang Pahar on the 6th Bohag for Maya. The 33 crore gods also come with her for Maya. So, the land where Devi Kamakhya does her Maya is called Mayang. The royal family and all the communities together celebrate this happening as "Pancha Gohain Mela and Garh Bhanga Utsav" every year from 4th Bohag to 6th Bohag. This is a popular festival of Mayang.

#### The Eighth Theory

In the Kachari language (Duwan) "Mairong" means Paddy. As this land is a low lying area by the Brahmaputra, so the flood water washes this area every year and makes this land fertile for growing Paddy. So the aborigines (the Kacharis) called the "Mairong Rajya" - Paddy growing kingdom. Gradually the word "Mairong" got corrupted into Mayang, i.e. Mairong>Maiyong>Mayang.

The aforesaid discussion has given us an idea about the origin of the name of Mayang. But the first theory that the name "Mayang" originated from the word "Mayamatta" does not arise, because, these two words - Mayamatta and Mayang - do not match with each other.

As for the second theory that the name "Mayang" originated from the word Maibong" has little chance. Because, Soinatva Singha did not come from Maibong but Dimapur.

As for the third theory that the name "Mayang" originated from "Mayangarh" has

maximum possibility. Because, in those days Mayang was a forest land and when the new town 'Mayangarh' was established, it got too much popularity among the inhabitants of the area and they tried to introduce themselves as the inhabitants of Mayangarh. It became a symbol of pride to them. Gradually, they began to call this word in short form i.e. Mayangarh to Mayang.

As for the 4th theory that the name Mayang originated from the Monipuri word "Mayong" does not hold good, because, neither the aborigines of Mayang nor the Dimasa-Kacharis spoke Monipuri. Neither Mayang nor Maibong was ever under the Monipuris.

Again, Mayang originated from the Tiwa word "Miyung" has no substance, because, not a single Tiwa or Lalung village is found within the natural boundaries of Mayang kingdom. So it is practical that the aborigines of Mayang did never name their kingdom with a borrowed word.

Again that Mayang originated from the word "Mair-Anga" is totally baseless. No religious books of the Hindus have mentioned that one of the parts of the body of Sati fell in Mayang area. Sati Devi's body was cut into 51 pieces and these 51 places have already been clearly identified but Kamakhya Dham of Mayang has not been cited anywhere.

The theory that Mayang originated from the Kachari word "Mairong" has strong possibility. It is an established fact that the Kacharis were the aborigines of Mayang kingdom. There are a number of Kachari villages in and around Mayang, such as Burhamayang, Pabhakati Kachari Gaon, Burha Pabhkati, Bahakabori Kacharigaon, Manaha Kacharigaon etc. So, the Kacharis were in majority in Mayang and hence the Kachari dialect "Mairong" meaning Paddy got wide spread popularity. And as time passed, the other tribes also began to call this land "Mairong Rajya". And this Mairong Rajya

got corrupted into "Mayang Rajya".

### **Mythological Kings of Mayang**

In ancient and early medieval periods Mayang was pre-dominantly a tribal land. But nobody knows definitely who the aborigines of this land were or which ruling dynasty ruled over this land of "black magic". The Mayang Rajvamsavali is also silent about these questions. But the geographical location of this kingdom, the archeological remains - ruins of architecture, sculptures, terra-cottas, potteries and the living religious shrines - provide us clue to think that, likewise the other parts of the Brahmaputra Valley, this land was also predominantly a tribal dominated area. The Kacharis, Bodos, Dimasa-Kacharis, Karbis (Mikirs) were the aborigines of Mayang and hence it can be presumed that some Kachari royal family must have ruled over their Kinsmen.

About the mythological or legendary kings of Mayang, Lokendra Hazarika gives an interesting account. He writes, "Mayamatta, the son of Arimatta, the Kachari king of "Gobha Rajya" was found guilty of treason and hence, he was expelled from the kingdom. After his expulsion, Mayamatta fled away and took shelter in the hilly region of Mayang. At first he made his dwelling at Bangthe Bheti (now Burhamayang, earlier it was called Bargaon) and remained as absconder. After living a few days (it may be a few years) as absconder, he tactfully collected a few powerful men of this area and became himself head of these people, slowly but steadily his power grew and he brought a number of villages under his control and declared himself the king over these villages<sup>5</sup>. The successors of Mayamatta ruled Mayang kingdom for a few centuries and last of them was king Jai singha whose daughter Phuleswari Konwari was married to Soinatva Singha, the Dimasa-Kachari Prince who had already fled away from Dimapur and settled at Chanaka of

Mayang. King Jai Singha had no son and after his death, his son-in-law Soinatva Singha ascended the throne of Mayang in 1538 A.D. and with this the rule of the royal family founded by Mayamatta came to an end.

### **Origin of the Dimasa-Kachari Royal family of Mayang:**

According to the Mayang Rajvamasavali, Soinat Singha, the first of the Dimasa-Kachari kings of Mayang, came from Dimapur-Maibong, the capital city of the then Dimasa-Kachari kingdom, now North Kachar Hill District of Assam. The Vamsavali states that Soinatva Singha was one of the younger brothers of king Satrudaman of Maibong.

The Kacharis belong to the great Bodo family of the Tibeto-Chinese speech family. The descendants of the Bodo race in the Brahmaputra valley and North Kachar Hills, excepting the Garos, Koches and Tripuris, are generally known as Kacharis<sup>6</sup>. The Kacharis are one of the earliest aboriginal tribes of the Brahmaputra Valley.

The Kacharis of the North-Kachar Hills, with whom we are mainly concerned, call themselves as "Dimasa" which in their own language means "Sons of the Great River". When the Ahoms arrived in the Brahmaputra Valley in the 13th century, the Dimasa-Kacharis had their capital at Dimapur. In 1536 A.D. the Kachari king Detchung was killed by the Ahom King Suhungmung in a war. As a result the Kachari capital Dimapur fell to the invading Ahom forces. The Kacharis retreated and established a new capital of their own at Maibong. Detchung's minor son ascended the throne with the Hindu name Nirbhaynarayan. The new king embraced Hinduism. His Guru and the Brahmin courtiers held that the ancestors of the kings were the descendants of Bhima, the Pandava hero of the Mahabharata. The king was given a genealogical list beginning with Bhismsena and Ghatotkacha to

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Mayang, an important small area in the Morigaon District of Assam, about 40 (forty) km. away from the capital of Assam, Dispur, is an area famous for its "Tantrism" and "Black Magic" since ancient times. At present, Mayang is only one of the Mauzas of the District of Morigaon. The land from the mighty Brahmaputra in the north to the Kollong River in the south and from the Pakaria (a rivulet) and the Manaha Beel in the east to the meeting point of the rivers Kollong-Kapili and the Brahmaputra in the west is known as Mayang. Mayang extends roughly between 267.15 and 212.5 North latitude, and 917 and 937 East longitude in the western most part of the present District of Morigaon. In the medieval period of Assam history, Mayang was one of the small kingdoms of Assam, much bigger than it is now. In the medieval and modern periods of Assam history the kingdom of Mayang consisted of Manaha, Konwor Gaon, Barokata, Burha-Burhi, Thaboori, Baha, Garubandha, Kamarpur, Kajakuchi, Burha Pabhakati, Lehpati, Chalihamari, Katahguri, Sonapar, Teteliguri, Saghdbubi, Sildubi, Khola Bhuyan, Hatigarh-Chakibari, Khatargaon, Kajali, Sagunpuri, Chaliari, Ujari, Kalatali, Barhaitari, Mantari, Hanaka, Hiloikhunda, Pakariguri, Sap-pari, Subardhan, Khatorgaon, Gachbari and some other small villages in the area. The capital of the kingdom of Mayang was at first Burchamayang and then Rajamayang.

Nirbhayanarayan.

The Mayang Rajvamsavali also corresponds with this theory of the origin/ancestry of Dimasa-Kachari kings of Mayang. But the statement that Soinatva Singha was one of the brothers of Satrudaman is baseless. It appears that Soinat Singha was not the younger brother of Satrudaman but probably a relative of Khunkhara, the Kachari King of Dimapur who was defeated by the Ahom King Suhungmung in the battle of Marangi in 1526 A.D. Again Satrudamana was contemporary of the Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603 - 1641) and Prabhakar, the Dimasa-Kachari King of Dimorua. Again, Prabhakar of Dimorua was contemporary of Sarascha Chandra Singha (1599 - 1624 A.D.), the 10th king of Mayang. The Mayang Rajvamsavali also mentions that when Pratap Singha came to Guwahati, Prabhakar and Sarascha Chandra Singha of Mayang were invited to meet Pratap Singha in 1617 A.D.

The aforesaid discussion proves that Soinatva Singha, the founder of the Dimasa-Kachari Kingdom in Mayang came from Dimapur and not from Maibong and he was not the younger brother of Satrudamana but a close relative of the then Kachari King of Dimapur, Khunkhara.

How the Dimasa-Kacharis came to Mayang and established their Kingdom:

After the Kacharis were defeated by the Ahoms in 1526 A.D, there was a political instability in the Kachari Kingdom of Dimapur. Though the Kacharis accepted the Ahom supremacy, they always feared that the Ahoms would invade their country again and would occupy it from them. Besides, they had enmity with the neighbouring Jayantia Kingdom. So, Soinatva Singha, a Dimasa-Kachari royal prince, left Dimapur with a few of his faithful contingents in search of his luck elsewhere. Soinatva Singha, in his westward march, at first,

came to Khagarijan in the present District of Nagaon and halted there for a few days. But the place was not suitable for his habitation and so he left it again and moved westward and reached the magic land of Mayang.

At first, Soinatva Singha, made his dwelling at Chanaka, a hilly place on the bank of the Brahmaputra. The place where Soinatva Singha made his capital is still today known as "Raja Bheti". At that time, the kingdom of Mayang was being ruled by one Jai Singha, a descendant of the legendary king Mayamatta. Jai Singha's capital was at Bargaon (Burhamayang) as it was a large village inhabited by different tribes. As the majority of villagers belonged to the Karbi community, hence the Karbi Bangthai was the village headman. This Karbi Bangthai happened to know about Soinatva Singha and introduced Soinatva Singha with King Jai Singha. King Jai Singha had no son but a daughter named Phuleswari Konwari. Jai Singha was very much pleased with this Kachari prince and married his daughter to Soinatva Singha and made him Yuvaraja (Crown Prince). After the death of King Jai Singha, Soinatva Singha ascended the throne of Mayang in 1538 A.D. Henceforth, the rule of the Dimasa-Kacharis began in Mayang.

Here a point must be made clear that Soinatva Singha left Dimapur after 1526 A.D. The author of the Mayang Rajvamsavali mentions that Soinatva Singha came from Dimapur-Maibong. Dimapur and Maibong are the two places. The Kacharis established their capital at Maibong only after their first capital town Dimapur had been captured by the Ahoms in 1536 A.D. Moreover, there was no any clash between the Ahoms and the Kacharis between 1537-1603 A.D. which might compel Soinatva Singha to leave his ancestral capital. Again Soinatva Singha became the king of Mayang in 1538 A.D. Before becoming king he had done a number of public welfare works (so mentioned

in the Vamsavali). It is also mentioned that Soinatva Singha was 35 years old when he reached Mayang and married Phuleswari Konwari before becoming king. It can be said here that if he left his home land after the establishment of Maibong, he could not have reached Mayang before 1537 A.D. and if he reached Mayang in or around 1537 A.D. it was quite impossible for him to become familiar with Jai Singha, the then king of Mayang. On the other hand, King Jai Singha would not have given his only daughter in marriage to an unknown person like Soinatva Singha.

There is another important point that Sarascha Chandra Singha, the 10th king of Dimasa-Kachari lineage of king, ascended the throne in 1599 A.D. at 62 years of his age. It means Sarascha Chandra Singha was born in 1537 A.D. (1599-62=1537). Sarascha Chandra Singha was the third son of Soinatva Singha. So it can be presumed that Soinatva Singha must have married Phuleswari Knowari before 1529 A.D. and he must have reached Mayang slightly before 1529 A.D.

About the controversy regarding the Saka era or Christian era, it may be said that Soinatva Singha ascended the throne in 1538 Christian

ere i.e. A.D, not Saka era as mentioned in the Vamsavali. As proof, it may be mentioned that the 10th King Sarascha Chandra Singha, the third son of Soinat Singha, who ascended the throne of Mayang in 1599A.D. and whose reign lasted for 25 years was contemporary of Ahom king Pratap Singha (1601 - 1641 A.D) and the Dimarua king Prabhakar Singha. King Sarascha Chandra Singha ascended the throne at the age of 62 years. So he was born in (1599 - 62) 1537 A.D and as he was the third son of Soinatva Singha, his parents must have married 7 or 8 years before his birth i.e. 1529 A.D.

#### Notes and References:

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*Education is what remains after one has forgotten one learned in school.*

—Albert Einstein



*Thinking always ahead, thing of trying to do more, bring a state of mind in which nothing is impossible.*

— Henry Ford