

Moidam of Dasarath Bohikhowa Barphukan in Khowang, Dibrugarh, Assam

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Abstract

This work on Moidam of Dasarath Bohikhowa Borphukan in Khowang of Dibrugarh district aims to explore the History and contribution of the official towards Ahom society. Dasarath Bohikhowa Borphukan was holding the office of Barphukan in Lower Assam with its the head office in Guwahati. His Moidam is located in the area of Khowang Tea Estate of Dibrugarh District. Besides 'Charaideo', the royal burial place of Ahom dynasty several Moidams are found in Upper Assam and one of those is the Moidam of the above mentioned official. It is worth to mention here that the 'Moidam' is an entombment system of the Tai-Ahom where they placed their deceased ancestors over the ground which are also known as 'Pyramids of Assam'. The study is based on secondary data only. The secondary data has been collected from published books, articles published in books or magazine, internet etc. Besides, field observation and interview tool are used to collect some data from local people.

Keyword: Moidam, Khowang, Ahom

Introduction:

The Moidams are the Royal Burial mounds of Ahom dynasty which are better known as the "Pyramids of Assam". In other word, Moidam is an entombment system of the Tai-Ahom where they placed their deceased ancestors over the ground as they believed that there is a life after death. The Tai-Ahom of Assam is an ethnic community who contributed a lot in forming the greater Assamese society. Under the leadership of Siu-Ka-Pha, Tai-Ahoms entered Assam from 'Mong Mao' of Upper Burma and established Ahom kingdom in Assam. Ahom dynasty ruled over the land from for almost 600 years from c.1228A.D. to c.1826 A.D. Moidams of Tai-Ahoms are sacred mausoleums, where basically the Ahom royals and nobles were buried. During the reign of the Ahom dynasty and prior to embracing the Hindu religion they were mostly buried in *Charaideo*, the royal burial place of the Ahom dynasty. Besides, some other Moidams are also located in Dibrugarh, Jorhat, and Sivsagar district of Assam. Several Moidams are spotted in Greater Khowang such as Moidam of Dasarath Bohikhowa Barphukan, Panch Bhonir Moidam etc. in Khowang Tea Estate, Rangchali, Moidam of Barbaruas in Chesa, Moidam of Dehingia Raja in Bahunipothar etc.

Objective:

This work aims to explore the Moidam of Dasarath Bohikhowa Barphukan located in Rangchali of Khowang area and also to study about his contribution towards Ahom administration and society.

Methodology:

The present study is concentrated on the Moidam of Dasarath Bohikhowa Barphukan which is based on secondary data only. The secondary data has been collected from published books, articles published in books or magazine, internet etc. Besides, field study and interview tool have been used to collect some data as some local people are involved to promote the area from Tourism perspective. This study is carried out on the basis of historical perspective.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS**Moidams:**

The “Moidam” is the sacred burial tomb of Ahom rulers who are also known as Swargadeo (Swarga-Heaven and Deo-Lord), the Ministers and the Queens. “Maidam” comes from the Tai word *Phrang Moi-Dam* where *Phrang Mai* means to bury and *Dam* means the spirit of a deceased person. The Moidams of Ahom kingdom are hemispherical in shape which could be compare with the Pyramids of Egypt from the perspective of it’s purpose. It’s a Tomb consists of one or more chambers covered by earthen mound. The Maidams are scattered in the districts of Charaideo, Sivsagar, Jorhat and Dibrugarh of upper Assam. Most of the Moidams are found in the mounded or hillock area of Charaideo district where most of the Moidams are of Kings, Queens and Nobles are founded in the area as it was the royal cemetery of Ahom Kingdom. From the time of the first king of Ahoms Chaulung Sukapha all the Royal Ahoms were entombed in Moidams till the time of Queen Phuleswari Konwari (1722-1731 A.D.) who abolished the custom of burial and started the custom of cremation of dead-bodies (Baruah,S., 1995,p295)

Rangchali and Khowang

Khowang is a historical place which is located 28 KM south to Dibrugarh town of Assam. It was believed that the meaning of “Khowang” is “Sworgor Duar” in Assamese i.e. Gate of Heaven. It can be explained in this way that, as the Ahom kings were titled as *Swarga-Deo* which means God of Heaven and the Ahom under the leadership of Siu-Ka-Pha landed in the area under our discussion came to be known as *Kho-wang*. But it is not acknowledged by new research as the lexical meaning of the word is poles apart. According to new research (Phukan., 2016) the founder of Ahom dynasty in Assam Chau-Lung Siu-Ka-Pha entered the land by sailing through ‘Burhi-Dihing’ river in the area which was known as Khowang now. He stayed in the area for one year of time. He made a bridge which was very necessary for cross the land. So the area came to be known as Kho-wang. The Tai words Kho means Bridge and Wang means necessary or unavoidable. It can be noted here that there is also a place known as ‘Kho Wang’ in *Yosthon* province of Thailand. Various sources both primary and secondary , says that Siu-ka-pha , the first king of Ahom dynasty entered Assam via *Burhidihing* (a tributary of river Brahmaputra) and landed first in the land and established himself in a place near to Khowang known as *Nagar* where a lot of Ahom evidence are scattered at random.

The Moidam of Dasharath Bohikhowa Phukan is also situated in the Jungle Mandir block of Khowang Tea Estate under *Rangchali* . The name of the historical place *Rangchali* or *Ranchali* is a combination of the words *Ron* and *Chali*. *Ron* means war and *Chali* means a camp of the Ahom army. During a war with Burmese in *Mankotta* near Dibrugarh, the Ahom army hold a camp in the area *Rangchali*. (Gogoi, U, 2021). So that, the place came to be known as *Rangchali*.

Moidam of Dasarath Bohikhowa Borphukan :

Historians and Researchers opined that the Moidam located in Jungle Mandir block of *Rangchali* within Khowang Tea Estate is the Moidam of Dasarath Bohikhowa Borphukan . It was 3 or 4 km away from NH-15 of Assam. During the period of Queen Victoria the whole area came under Andrew Yule Tea Company and they founded the Tea Estate there.

Dasarath Bohikhowa Borphukan was holding the office of Barphukan in Lower Assam during the time of Swargadeo Rajeswar Singha (Gogoi, 2000). Though the head office of Barphukan was in Guwahati, perhaps he was assigned *Bilat* (A piece of land) and *Khat* (Additional land cleared by the officer for agriculture purpose) by Ahom King against his service towards Ahom administration Khowang. It can be assumed that during the later age of Ahom Kingdom , the the kingdom was confined in upper Assam , hence the office of Barphukans(In-charge of Lower Assam) got less importance. Besides, due to Moahmoriya Rebellion in Upper Assam , the Ahom official were summoned to suppress the rebel people. Hence the ancestors of Bohikhowa Barphukan established themselves in the area assigned to them. The Khowang Tea Estate where the Moidam of Borphukan was situated was known as *Borphukan Bari* or *Phukanbari Bagicha* (Garden of *Phukan* or *Borphukan*) as the land assigned to Dasarath Bohikhowa Borphukan and his ancestors. His father *Dekajona* alias Gadadhar Tarun Duarah Borphukan , grandfather Horujona Duarah Barphukan alias Bijay alias Anuj Duarah Barphukan were the well known Barphukans of Ahom period (Gogoi, N., 2000, p12) and Krishnanath Tamuli Borphukan (Uncle) by Swargadeo Rajeswar Singha, Pramatta Singha and Siva Singha accordingly (Barphukan, H, 2021, p58). The existence of Moidams in *Phukanbari* indicates that this area was used as burial ground of the family of Barphukan. In the area 5 Moidams are located horizontally which are known as *Panch Bhonir Moidam* (Moidams of 5 sisters), one Moidam is located near to the Moidam of Dasarath Bohikhowa Borphukan, which is said to be the Moidam of his wife. A lot of Moidams are also scattered in the area which could be considered as a topic of more research.

Besides his administrative duties Barphukan also contributed for the better life of the society of that period. For a better communication with the capital in Rangpur he constructed *Borphukan Ali* (20 Km), the road which joins Khowang of Dibrugarh district and Demow of Sivsagar district. Existence of three *Rojadinia Phukhuri* (Tank of the Kings) in Khowang Tea Estate were said to be excavated by Bohikhowa Borphukan. Among these three tank one is spotted near the Bungalow of the Manager of Khowang Tea Estate. It was said that one *Siva Doul* (Temple of Lord Siva) was there on the bank of the tank and the local people noticed the Trishul (Trident) and *Kolosi* (Shikhara) are half submerged in the ground. The Idols of the temple are now installed with all devotion in the Bungalow of the Manager of Khowang Tea Estate which was now reserved as YULE Heritage Site. Thus Barphukan had contributed for socio-religious condition of the society of the period.

The height of the Moidam of Dasarath Bohikhowa is higher in comparison to the other Moidams of the area. It is worth to mention here that the height of the Moidams shows the power, status and recourses of the officer. The main Moidam of Dasarath Boikhowa Borphukan's is not in its unharmed condition as the inner chamber was opened from the upper side. From time to time, Moidams attracted the plunders or robbers for the precious stuff that were buried along with the royal deceased. During Mirjumla's invasion and in British period , a lot of Moidams were plundered in search of precious items and such Moidams are still there in Charaideo. As stated by the people of the area, once British tried to plunder the Moidam of Dasarath Bohikhowa Borphukan but couldn't be able to dug the Moidam due to some miraculous reason. After more than 100 years of this incident, some people of Marwari community also

tried to excavate the Moidam but due to some miraculous activity they fled off from the place. These incidents are mentioned in some other published materials too.

Conclusion:

Moidams are considered as an important area of study in Assam. Already various attempts have been made to study about the construction of Moidams in Assam and also about the Moidams of Charaideo. But, a little attention has been paid to the other Moidams scattered here and there of Upper Assam such as *Dasarath Bohikhowa Barphukan*, *Panch Bhonir Moidam*, *Barbaruas Moidam* and the history behind such Moidams. This is a micro level study and there is a lot of scope for further study on this topic as well.

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