



# The Siu-Ka-Pha Chair

শ্রী শিব সিং ফৌজdar



**E**stablishment of a Chair in the name of a great personality in the University system has significance and impact on academia and its progress. In order to have progress in field of research and innovative ideas in a specific area or to have knowledge on a particular domain and its dissemination, the creation and establishment of Chair has been proved to be effective and fruitful. Further, it is a tribute and reverence to the great personalities by establishing of Chairs in the Universities. The basic aim of establishment of Chair in the name of a personality is to make progress in academic and research in the particular areas which are associated with the Person after whom the Chair is named. The Government of Assam was desirous of establishing a Chair in the name of Siu-Ka-Pha, the first Ahom king in medieval Assam and who was the founder of the Ahom kingdom in the 13th Century and has chosen the Dibrugarh University as a place for establishing the Chair. For the purpose, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed on the 2nd day of January, 2020 between the Government of Assam and the Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh, Assam.



Chaolung Siu-Ka-Pha, the charismatic leader of the Tai-Shans, is regarded as the founding father of the Ahom Kingdom in the Brahmaputra Valley which is well-known for maintaining glorious reign for nearly 600 years. It also successfully resisted the Mughal invasion in Northeast India. The Tai-Shans, a branch of the great Tai family of Mongoloid stock, originally inhabited in South China and some parts of Upper Burma (Myanmar). From a place called Maulung in Upper Burma, Siu-Ka-Pha made his adventurous pursuit, accompanied by a large number of followers, and entered into the Brahmaputra Valley after

crossing the Patkai hills around 1228 AD. From the records it appears that Siu-Ka-Pha was a prince by birth. Being a prince, Siu-Ka-Pha had the idea of polity and statecraft what he tried to implement in the political vacuum of Brahmaputra Valley created after the decline of the kingdom of Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa of early Assam.

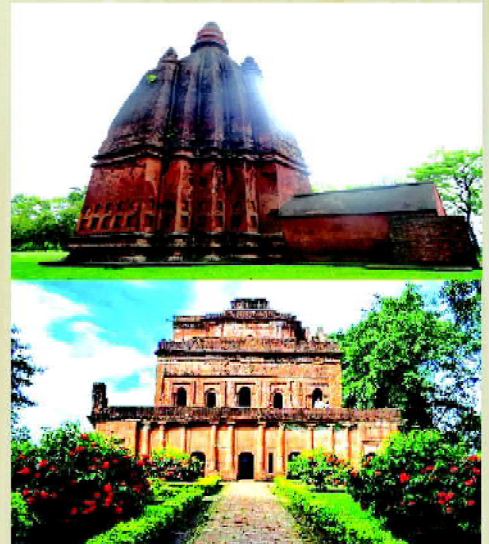
Carrying along with them the technology of plough and wet rice agriculture from their place of origin, Siu-Ka-Pha and his followers started cultivating the fallow lands of Upper Assam and planted the seed of 'Mung-Dun-Shun-Kham' (land full of golden gardens). By then, the tribes of the region like the Morans and the Borahis were practitioners of plough-less shifting cultivation, gradually



brought under the process of Ahom state and social formation which primarily comprised of adoption of the wet rice cultivation. It ushered in changes in the economic structure, especially in surplus generation and consequently leading to the process of state formation. Initially, during Siu-Ka-Pha's time the Ahom state was confined to parts of Upper Assam with its capital at Charaideo. Thus the advent of Siu-Ka-Pha had a considerable impact on the politico-economic formation of medieval Assam.

However, Siu-Ka-Pha's achievement does not end with

the political formation of medieval Assam. Rather, Siu-Ka-Pha is hailed as the personality who founded the edifice of larger Assamese society. He did not come as raiding conqueror, but as leader of agricultural folk in search of land. It appears that he did not encroach upon the lands of local peasants, but opened up new areas for settlement and cultivation. Liberal in social outlook, Siu-Ka-Pha was conscious of not hurting the sentiments of the autochthones by imposing on them an arbitrary government; on the contrary, adopted such a broad and conciliatory policy that some of the tribes like the Morans



and Borahis preferred serving under his authority for enjoying freedom. It appears from records that after establishing his capital at Charaideo, Siu-Ka-Pha organized a feast and invited the local inhabitants to dine with them and sought their cooperation on friendly terms and stated that: "Come and have mutual introduction with us. You are the host, the native of the land. We are guest coming from up country. You should introduce us with local people." It indicates the far-sightedness of Siu-Ka-Pha as he was keen to understand the efficacy of services from the local inhabitants and harnessing their strength as well. Intermarrying with the local people, adopting their manners and customs and appointing them in offices of administration, the Ahoms in course of

time had become one with the various tribes. By bringing various ethnic groups and region under one ruler, Siu-Ka-Pha and his descendants paved the way for shaping the region what we presently identify as Assam and the greater Assamese society.

Over and above, the tradition of Buranji writing began with Siu-Ka-Pha. The political instincts which motivated the Ahoms to record the chief events of the region in the Buranjis, the most valuable of their contribution to Indian culture, are traceable from the command of Siu-Ka-Pha to the effect that the court chroniclers should record the





detailed particulars of every region. As *Deodhai Asam Buranji* records, Siu-Ka-Pha commanded to his fellowmen as such: "The pundits should write down all the particulars, whenever an incident takes place, when a person dies and when we acquire new followers." Initially written in Tai language, Assamese succeeded as language of Buranjis with the conversion of Ahoms to Hinduism and these vast number of Buranjis provide materials for reconstructing history of Assam. Thus, the glorious tradition of history-writing in Assam starts with Siu-Ka-Pha, a precious contribution to Indian historiography for which Assam boast of. From an adventurer to political organizer, a harbinger of wet rice cultivation to social

mobiliser and integrator of various cultural traits, Chaolung Siu-Ka-Pha was a person of versatile genius whose impact on Assamese history and society is thriving in multi-faceted ways.

### VISION AND MISSION:

The Chair is an academic unit established in the Department of History, Dibrugarh University to strive for research in the field of History of Medieval and Modern North East India to unravel the multifaceted socio-economic, cultural and political processes which shaped the history and identity of Assam and North East India. Due to its geo-strategic location, Assam and North



East India had from time immemorial been influenced by Greater Indian as well as South-East Asian cultures and traditions. The coming of the Tai Ahoms to the Brahmaputra valley in the 13th century under the leadership of Siu-Ka-Pha and the establishment of the Ahom state which ruled continuously for six hundred years shaped and promoted the cultural, linguistic and political identities of Assam. The historical understanding of the making of regional identities in North East India which developed through active interaction with Indian

Civilization and Eastern neighbouring countries will definitely help in understanding the present transformations as well as future possibilities. Through active engagement with research, the Chair will focus on promotion and preservation of the rich tangible and intangible heritage of North East India so that knowledge of these can be disseminated to a wider public forum for national integration. Pursuit for meaningful and excellent research in collaboration with national and international institutions would be the priority of the Chair.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

The 'Siu-Ka-Pha Chair' shall be engaged in research in the following areas-

- (a) Historical linkages of Assam as well as North East India with the South-East Asian Countries
- (b) History of early state formation in Assam and North East India
- (c) Ethno-history of North East India
- (d) History of socio-economic and cultural interactions and processes towards preservation and promotion of identity formation
- (e) Preservation and promotion of ethno-cultural heritage of Assam and North East India.



### **FUTURE PLAN OF ACTION:**

Based on the Vision, Mission and Objectives, the Chair has marked out some future plan of action with some long and short term provisions.

(i) The Ahom rulers had maintained political and cultural relations with the rulers of Mong Mao, a Tai state in Yunnan in southern China, and of Mong Kwang (Mogaung in Burmese), another Tai-Shan state in Upper Myanmar from the early 13th century to till the end of the Ahom rule in 1826. Even after the end of political

regime, the Ahoms had continued socio-religious and cultural interactions with the countries like Myanmar, Thailand and other South and South-East Asian countries. The 'Siu-Ka-Pha Chair' has a long term plan to make an elaborate research on socio-religious, economic and political historical linkages with South-East Asian countries.

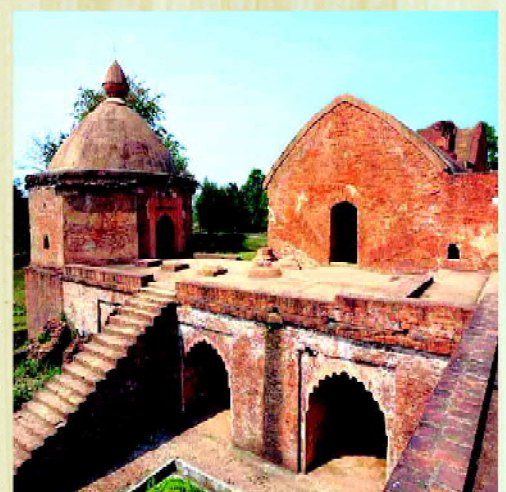
- (ii) At the time of advent of Ahoms, different areas of Assam had been ruled by different rulers/dynasties - Chutiya in the East, Kamata (12th- 15th centuries) and Koch (16th- 17th centuries) in West, Kachari from



Dikhow river to Kalang including Doyang- Dhansiri valleys, Morans in the area between the Buridihing and Dishang, Borahis in the Dishang and Dikhow. The Barabhuyans, after the decline of ancient Kamrup had emerged along the north bank of river Brahmaputra in the present Lakhimpur and Nagaon districts. But in due course of time the Ahoms had emerged as the single powerful polity in the whole area and it dominated the polity till the early part of nineteenth century. Although number of scholars have already discussed at length and dealt with the matter of Ahom state and polity formation, still it has ample scope for further study. An attempt will

be made to revisit the process of polity formation of the Ahom State.

- (iii) The process of social formation during Ahom rule which was started with the establishment of Ahom state by Siu-Ka-Pha and culminated into formation of Assamese identity and society is another wide area of research. The backbone of the Assamese identity and society has been formed during this period through a complex process where





different political, socio-cultural, religious and economic issues and phenomena have been involved. This area will also be a part of research and study of the Siu-Ka-Pha Chair.

(iv) The Siu-Ka-Pha Chair has a long term plan for studying the Ethno-history of North East India. From its very beginning, the Ahom state had maintained either diplomatic or friendly relations with the different ethnic groups within and outside the state. These relations were not simply political; it had created a new dimension in socio-cultural interactions among them.

(v) Establishment of a Repository of Historical Documents: The Chair is planning to establish a Repository of Historical Documents (published &

unpublished) related to the Ahom regime in Digitized form at the premises of the office of Siu-Ka-Pha Chair.

(vi) The Siu-Ka-Pha Chair will organize Seminars (Regional/ National / International), Lecture Programs and other academic works on the topics related to the Chair.

### **STRUCTURE:**

The 'Siu-Ka-Pha Chair' shall be attached with the Department of History, Dibrugarh University in the following structure-

- (a) Chair Professor
- (b) Research Associate 1 (one)
- (c) Office Assistant 1 (one)
- (d) Grade IV Staff 1 (one)



### **GRANTS AND DONATIONS:**

Grants and donations in cash or in kind or in the form of infrastructure development of the Siu-Ka-Pha Chair, by organizations, institutions or individuals will be received with heartfelt acknowledgement, with a prior approval of the Authorities of the Dibrugarh University. The Advisory Board has passed a resolution in this respect where the Siu-Ka-Pha Chair has been allowed to receive all kinds of grants and donations with a prior approval of the Authorities of the Dibrugarh University.

## Advisory Board of the Chair:

|  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| <b>Prof. Ranjit Tamuli</b><br>Vice-Chancellor, Dibrugarh University  | Chairperson         |
| <b>Mr. Pallav Gopal Jha, IAS</b><br>Deputy Commissioner of Dibrugarh   | Member              |
| Representative nominated by the Government of Assam, [nomination awaited]  | Member              |
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