

The Date of the Sadiya Stone Pillar Inscription

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Originally discovered a few miles from Sadiya about 65 years ago¹ the Sadiya Stone Pillar has been preserved in the Assam State Museum at Gauhati since 1953.² The pillar entwined by the figure of a snake bears inscription in the Ahom language. Soon after its discovery, the impressions of the inscription were sent to Rai Sahib Golap Chandra Barua, Deputy Inspector of Schools, who was then considered as the "only living authority on the Ahom language" for decipherment.³ According to K. N. Dikshit, the then Superintendent of the Eastern Circle, Archaeological Survey of India, Golap Chandra Barua submitted only a "summary" of the inscription⁴ and it was this "summary" that was published by the former in the *Annual Report* for 1924-25 of the Archaeological Survey of India.⁵ It is the only reading of the inscription on the Sadiya Stone Pillar so far made by any one. On the basis of this "summary" that the scholars have made their own speculations about the date of the inscription.

It is, therefore relevant as well as important to reproduce the summary reading as made by Golap Chandra Barua and published by K. N. Dikshit. It runs thus :⁶

I, the Dihingia Bar Gohain, do engrave on the stone pillar and the copper plate these writings (on the strength of which) the Misimis are to dwell on the hills near the Dibong river with their families, children, attendants and followers. They will occupy all the hills. They will give four basketfuls of poison and other things as tribute and keep watch over the body of the fat Gohain (Sadiya Khowa Gohain). If anybody happens to be in possession of and wishes to remain on both sides (of the hills), he is prohibited from encroachment. If any body should dwell by the side of the hills, he will surely become a slave (of the Misimis).

"I do proclaim wide that if anybody sits exalted (i. e., comes

in power, i. e., becomes a ruler) he should not break (the arrangement) and break the stone."

In the "summary" given above, the name of the Ahom ruler during whose reign the pillar with inscription was raised does not occur. As such speculations as to its date have been made by scholars on the basis of certain names such as "Misi-mi", "Dibong", "Dihingia Bar Gohain" appearing in the inscription.

K. N. Dikshit thinks that "it must be not later than the first quarter of the sixteenth century, when the country around Sadiya first came under the occupation of the Ahom kings of Assam under Su-hum-mung (circa 1524 A. D.)."⁷ The title "Dihingia Bar Gohain" of the inscription leads E. A. Gait to fix the date either to Siu-hum-mong (Su-hum-mung or Dihingia Raja) or Siu-klam-pha (Su-klam-pha), a later ruler.⁸ In his own words, "the official in question was perhaps the Bar Gohain of the Dihingia Raja ; and if so the inscription refers to the settlement made with the Mishmis when the country round Sadiya was first brought under Ahom rule". But he adds, "it may, however, refer to the later settlement effected with the Mishmis in the reign of Suklampha".

S. K. Bhuyan, on the other hand thinks, "The Dihingia Bargohain of the inscription was probably the new governor of Sadiya appointed in 1687, and the restriction on the Mishmis was imposed by him for their complicity in the Miri insurrection of 1683."⁹ In that case it belongs to the reign of Gadadhar Singha. Following Bhuyan, L. Devi too writes, "The Dihingia Bargohain of the inscription was probably the son of the Dihingia Phukan, a member of the Miri Handikai Bargohain family, who was appointed Governor of Sadiya in 1687, and described in the old chronicles as 'Bargohain of Sadiya'"¹⁰. "Later on N. K. Basu has gone a step further than "probably" of Bhuyan and Devi when he writes that the inscription on the pillar records an arrangement made with the Mishmis in 1687."¹¹ In his own words :

"The Naobaicha Phukan constructed ramparts upto the Brahmaputra enclosing the Assamese villages. He completed the regulation of Sadiya in 1687. The son of the Dihingia Phukan, a member of the Miri Handikoi Bura Gohain family was appointed Governor of Sadiya. Known as "Buragohain of Sadiya" he fixed the habitation of the Mishmis in a restrictive measure for their complicity in the Miri insurrection of 1683—this is men-

tioned in an inscription contained in a stone pillar found near Sadiya".¹²

It may be pointed out in passing that Basu's reference to "the Miri Handikoi Bura Gohain family" is basically wrong as the Buragohain family does not have any such 'Miri Handikoi Bura Gohain' branch.

Raj Mohan Nath says that it was "installed by the Mishmis in 1532 A. D."¹³ While in the Introduction to the reprint of Col. L. W. Shakespear's *History of the Assam Rifles* N. N. Acharyya writes that "it bears the date, the 16th and the 17th century A. D."¹⁴ On the other hand Benudhar Sharma thinks that it was not raised by the Ahoms.¹⁵

From foregoing references, it becomes evident that scholars differ in fixing the date of the inscription. The main reason for this is that the "summary" translation as supplied by Golap Chandra Barua and published by K. N. Dikshit, on which all scholars have so far depended for information, does not contain the name of the king or the date of the inscription.

It is, therefore, of primary importance to examine the original inscription which is in the Ahom language and script for any further clue or reference that may help us in fixing the date of the inscription.

On several occasions the present writer has tried, in company with Mrs. Ye Hom Gohain, the Special Officer for Ahom Studies, and Mr. Nabin Shyam, the Ahom Pandit, both of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies of the Government of Assam, to read the inscription.

For the purpose of the present article which is concerned with the date of the inscription, it is sufficient to state that the original inscription in Ahom language contains the name of the king which is distinctly inscribed in five words within two square incised frames. It is placed towards the upper part of the pillar just below the vase but separate from other lines of writing. His name reads : *CHAO-PHA SIU-HUM-MONG*. So distinct is the name that anyone having knowledge of the Ahom script and language can read it without difficulty.

From the chronicles, we know that Chao-pha Siu-hum-mong commonly called Dihingia Raja in the Assamese chronicles, ruled from *lak-ni Rung-mao* to *lak-ni Ka-rao*¹⁶ ((corresponding to A. D. 1497 to 1539). It was during his reign that Sadiya country then called Mong Tio-ra ruled by the Chutiya kings was annexed to the Ahom kingdom sometime in A. D.

1523-24¹⁷ and was placed under a Thao-mong or Governor. Phra-sen-mong was the first Governor of Sadiya appointed in A. D. 1523¹⁸. He belonged to the Bar Gohain family.¹⁹

It is therefore beyond any doubt that the Sadiya Stone Pillar inscription belongs to the reign of Chao-pha Siu-hum-mong who ruled from 1497 to 1539 A. D.²⁰

Notes and References

1. The exact date of discovery is nowhere available. But on the basis of various information it is believed that it was discovered during the dry season of 1919-20. See my article "A Note on the Sadiya Stone Pillar" to be published in the Benudhar Sarma commemoration volume, Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti, 1985.
2. It is also called Sadiya Snake Pillar as it is entwined by the figure of a snake.
3. K. N. Dikshit in *Annual Report for 1924-24*, Archaeological Survey of India, pp. 157-58.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *A History of Assam*, 2nd Edition, Calcutta, 1926, p. 89.
9. *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, Gauhati, 1949, p. 39.
10. *Ahom-Tribal Relations*, Gauhati, 1968, p. 186.
11. *Assam in the Ahom Age*, Calcutta, 1970, p. 138.
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Glorious Assam*, First Edition, 1949, Plate III.
14. First Reprint, 1980, Introduction, p. v.
15. Presidential Address of the History Section of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, Shillong, 1953.
16. *Ahom-Buranji*, ed. and tr. by Rai Sahib Golap Chandra Barua, Calcutta, 1920, pp. 54-78. The Assamese chronicles of later date differ in their dates given in *Saka*.
17. *Ahom-Buranji*, pp. 56-57 in original text in Ahom language
18. *Ibid.*; S. K. Bhuyan (ed.), *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, Gauhati, 1962, p. 19.
19. S. K. Bhuyan (ed.), *Satsari Assam Buranji*, pp. 15, 60-61, 135; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, 1962, p. 19.
20. A full reading of the inscription is being published elsewhere.