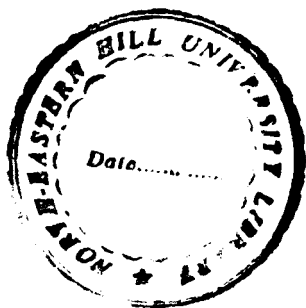


**PROCEEDINGS OF
NORTH EAST INDIA
HISTORY ASSOCIATION**



**TWENTY SIXTH SESSION
KOKRAJHAR CAMPUS, GAUHATI UNIVERSITY
KOKRAJHAR
2005**

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Preface

The Twenty sixth Annual Conference of the NEIHA was hosted by the Kokrajhar Campus, Gauhati University at Kokrajhar from 24th to 26th November, 2005. Sri Emmanuel Mushahary, President of the reception Committee welcomed the guests and delegates in the inaugural function, and Sri Hagrama Mahilary, Chief B.T.C., addressed the gathering as the Chief Guest. The 26th Session was inaugurated by Dr. R.N. Mushahary. The three days of the Conference was very well attended by historians and other social scientists from different parts of the region and also from other parts of the country and the academic sessions, the most important part of the Annual conference of NEIHA, saw the active participation of all NEIHA members present. We would like to record our thanks to the Joint Registrar, Kokrajhar Campus, Gauhati University for having hosted the Twenty Sixth Session of NEIHA and also our very sincere thanks to Dr. Sekhar Brahma, the Local Secretary, and his colleagues and students who worked untiringly to make the session a success.

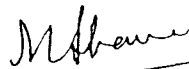
This Volume is a collection of the papers presented in the various academic panels of the XXVIth Session and also the proceedings of the business meetings of the session.

The Association is grateful to the Indian Council of Historical Research for the financial support advanced towards the publication of the Proceedings volume. Here we would again like to remind the esteemed members of NEIHA that they should take care to see that their papers follow the NEIHA style of referencing and also to ensure that the revised papers reach us within the last day announced in the business session. Without this co-operation from the members the work of the Editorial Board gets held up and it also becomes difficult to meet the deadlines of the press. It was mainly for these reasons and also of course for the considered opinion of the Panel Chairpersons, whose comments on every paper were clearly recorded and the deliberations of the Editorial Board, that a number of papers had to be abstracted or listed. The task of editing, proof reading etc. of such a large number of papers within a very limited period is very time consuming and we can do the work to the satisfaction of all NEIHA members only with the co-operation of all the paper presenters.

This volume also includes the papers which were presented in the symposium on "**Methods of Historical Research**" that was held during the XXVIth Session as per the decision in NEHA that the year when there are no Endowment Lectures to be organized a symposium on some topic of historical significance would be organized.

Finally I would like to say a very special word of thanks to the members of the Editorial Board, Prof. J. B. Bhattacharjee, Prof. Mignonette Momin and Prof. D.R.Syiemlieh who made my work much lighter by giving a lot of their time to sit through the Editorial Board meetings to decide on the status of the papers and not only editing the papers but also helping out with a lot of the proof reading of the papers. I would also like to thank Mr. Pradeep Shaha and his staff of Modern Offset for their interest in the work and getting the volume ready in time for release in the 27th session.

Shillong
10th August, 2006



(Manorama Sharma)

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History of the Dimasa-Kachari Royal Dynasty : Fact and Fiction

S.K. Bose

According to Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, "Bodo, although now split up in various dialects in Assam and in Tripura as well as Bengal, at one time was one of the most important Kirata or Tibeto-Burman languages of India. A huge area in North-Eastern India including Assam, North and East Bengal and also probably North Bihar was Bodo-speaking. The early culture of Assam within the orbit of Brahmanical Hindu culture as it developed in the Ganges Valley through the joint labours of the Aryan and pre Aryan peoples was primarily the work of the Bodos".¹

The Dimasa-Kacharis are known to belong to this great Bodo race, and it has been suggested that they are among the earliest inhabitants of the Assam valley.² Absence of their own historical chronicle made their history very obscure.³ The successive history of the Dimasa-Kachari royal family is also hazy. Except for the names of some of the kings, there is not much known about them. Whatever available, is based on sources such as stone inscriptions, coins, some chronicles of the neighbouring kingdoms and inscriptions on the canons. In the above circumstances, Dimasa coins are extremely important contemporary live documents as well as source of historical information. The examination of the recently discovered coins and re-examination of the coins preserved at the various museums and private collection, have brought to light many new facts. Those facts have not only helped in an appraisal of the actual situation, but also in the correction of errors and omissions. On the one hand, the insufficiency of evidence and on the other, the existence of some counterfeit coins made in 60s and 70s in the name of the Dimasa rulers, has prevented the real facts from coming to light. In fact, most of the writings on the royal history of the Dimasa-Kacharis was flawed because the numismatic information based on many of such coins surfaced in Kolkata and published subsequently are now accepted as forgeries.⁴ A list of such published coins are given below :

<u>King</u>	<u>Date mentioned on the forged coin</u>	
Meghanarayana	Saka 1498	(1576 A.D.)
Pratapnarayana	Saka 1528	(1606 A.D.)

Pratapnarayana	<i>Saka</i> 1530	(1608 A.D.)
Bhimadarpanarayana	<i>Saka</i> 1552	(1630 A.D.)
Indraballavanarayana	<i>Saka</i> 1560	(1638 A.D.)
Harischandranarayana	<i>Saka</i> 1642	(1720 A.D.)
Harischandranarayana	<i>Saka</i> 1643	(1721 A.D.)

The opinions expressed by Nicholas Rhodes and M. Mitchiner and the facts put forward by them, conclusively proved that the above mentioned coins were fraud of the current times.⁷ These counterfeit coins were modeled on Yashonarayana's *tanka* coin preserved at the State Museum, Guwahati and dated according to Gait's *A History of Assam*. The person (s) involved in the forgery, however did not get a chance to examine the Yashonarayana's coin with own hands. Hence, in their effort to make the shape of the coin identical to the original, the culprits did not realize that they weighed more than the originals. The die and calligraphy analysis clearly indicate that the forged coins are different in nature compared to the originals.

Two forged coins bearing the dates Saka 1642 and 1643 are also available. Gait mentioned that two kings by the name of Harischandra have ruled the Dimasa kingdom.⁸ According to him, the first Harischandranarayana reigned over the kingdom in 1643 Saka. As proof, he has referred to the wall inscription of the rock-cut temple of Ranacandi of Maibong, which mentions that the stone temple was built by Hidimbewar Hariscandranarayana in Saka 1643.⁷ He also mentioned about a stone inscription wherein it was mentioned that another Hariscandranarayana built a temple at Khaspur in Saka 1693.⁷ It appears that two kings of the same name and belonging to the same family reigned over the kingdom within a span of only fifty years. This fact aroused our curiosity and we re-examined the entire body of information that was available. We have come to know the following facts :

- (a) It is mentioned in the Ahom Buranjis that in Saka 1629, the Ahom king Rudrasimha captured the Dimasa king Tamradhvaja.⁹
- (b) According to Gait, Tamradhvaja was succeeded to the throne by his nine year old son Suradarpa. In this context, he mentions the manuscript copy of Naradi Puran (or Srinaradiyakathamrita),¹⁰ which was written in Saka 1652, during the reign of king Sudradarpa.¹¹ So, if in Saka 1629, Tamradhyja was reigning and was succeeded by his minor son, Suradarpa, who was reigning in Saka 1652, then in no way could Hariscandranarayana reign there in Saka era 1643.

- (c) Another manuscript *Gopichandrer Panchali*, written in Saka 1670, mentions that the crown prince of king Gopichandra was Prince Hariscandranarayana.¹² This proves that Hariscandra must have ruled after Saka 1670.
- (d) Gait has written that the stone temple of Ranacandi at Maibong was erected in Saka 1643, as per inscription engraved on the wall of the temple. Unfortunately, Gait's reading was incorrect. This wrong reading led to believe the existence of a king Hariscandra I, who never existed. We have read the inscription carefully, and have photographed it. From the photograph, it is clear that the accurate date is Saka 1683, and not 1643. In this connection, Padmanath Bhattacharyya had specially mentioned in 1920 A.D. that the correct date was Saka 1683 and he was convinced about it.¹³ The characteristic feature of the fake coins of king Hariscandranarayana dated Saka 1642 and 1643 is that while the former shows him to be a Saivite, the latter coin shows the king as Sakta. This is possible if two different persons make the forgery separately and themselves decide what religious faith the king professed.
- (e) Rhodes and Mitchiner have already referred to these coins as modern forgery. One of the interesting observations made by them was that the obverse die used to strike a forged coin of Bhimadarpa (dated Saka 1552) was used again to produce the coin of Hariscandranarayana dated Saka 1642, a mistake on the part of the forger.¹⁴

Dimasa-Kachari coins are very valuable and rare. As a result, dishonest persons were seized with an eager greed to fake them.¹⁵ Most interestingly, all the forged Dimasa coins surfaced one by one, marketed by mainly one dealer and provenance of the coins were stated to be from the treasure of an unknown royal family in North Bengal.

In 1993 A.D., a silver coin in the name of Indraballavnarayana was sold to a museum in Kolkata. This coin was also akin to all the fake Dimasa-Kachari coins in respect of size, weight, thickness as well as calligraphy. On request of the authority of the museum, this author had given written opinion highlighting as many as twelve weaknesses. Later on, the concerned seller expressed his regret and refunded the value received.

In this article we would like to present some facts based on authentic Kachari coins :

- a) The first mention of the Hachengsa dynasty is found in the coin of an unknown king Vira Vijaya Narayana. The coin was dated 1442. As Saka dates were used in all subsequent Dimasa-Kachari coins, we may accept this date as belonging to the Saka era and corresponding to 1520 A.D. Specimens of this valuable coin are preserved at the Indian Museum, Kolkata and the British Museum, London. The obverse and reverse of the coin bear the legend *Viravijayanarayana Candicharanaparayana Hachengsa Sakramardana Deva 1442*. Some numismatists and historians have mistaken 'Sakra' and have recorded it as 'Satru'.¹⁶
- b) Gait has reported that Kachari king Yasonarayana defeated the Ahom king Pratap Simha in Saka 1528 and assumed the title 'Pratapnarayana'. His source of this information was a chronicle (*Buranji*) written two hundred years after the event.¹⁷ However, a coin dated Saka 1523, in the name of Pratapnarayana is preserved at the British Museum. As no event was mentioned in issuing the said coin, we may presume that Pratapnarayana ascended the throne in Saka 1523 and Yasonarayana and Pratapnarayana are two different kings.¹⁸
- c) Pratapnarayana was succeeded by Naranarayana. A coin issued by the later king is dated Saka 1532.¹⁹ This indicates that Pratapnarayana's reign ended in Saka 1532, i.e. 1610 A.D.
- d) The genuine Dimasa-Kachari coins are preserved at few centres. The Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Guwahati is one of them. There are fifty nine Dimasa coins bearing the names of Yasonarayana, Indra Pratapnarayana, Naranarayana and Darpabhimannarayana. These coins have been discovered from Haflong area.²⁰
- e) The Fitzwillium Museum (Cambridge) has preserved coins belonging to Yasonarayana Indra Pratapnarayana and Tamradhvaja.²¹
- f) Assam State Museum is also possessing five coins of Yasonarayana and two of Indra Pratapnarayana.²²
- g) A very important coin in the name of Nirbhayanarayana is preserved at the Dacca National Museum.²³
- h) Besides the above, few Dimasa coins can also be seen in the private museums and collections. But most of those coins were used for

trade purposes. Calligraphy, weight and size-wise those are akin to the Sultani or Mughal coins. Most interesting private collections are of J.P. Goenka²⁴ and I.K. Kejriwal of Kolkata. Another important collection belongs to the family of R.Candoria of London. The last mentioned collection was probably discovered during the setting up of railway lines in North Cachar Hills, especially in the area of Maibong and Haflong.²⁵

I wish to conclude this paper with the hope that historians will assess the above facts with the due importance they deserve.

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