

## SYMBOLS IN NARANARAYAN'S 'MUDRA' AND A CASE OF KHYRIM COIN

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The mid 14th and 15th centuries saw the rise of a kingdom known as 'Kamata'. This was ruled by powerful Hindu kings, who held sway over the region now in and around the modern district of Cooch Behar to a part of Assam. This glory subdued, when, in 1494 AD, Ala-al-din Hussain Shah of Bengal invaded the territory. This invasion ended the rule of the Kamata Kings, on whose ruins, in 1511 A.D., the Kingdom of Koch Behar was established by a chieftain of the Koch tribe, namely Chandan. He was succeeded by Visvasimha, who consolidated the Kingdom, and shifted his capital from Chikangram in Goalpara district in Assam to its present site, Cooch Behar. Interesting, in the Baharistan-i-Ghaibi, a subsequent Koch king Lakshmi Narayan, who ruled west of the Sankosh was called the Raja of Kamata.<sup>1</sup>

At the time of Visvasimha's death, Malla Deb and Sukladhvaj, his two eldest sons, were at far away Varanasi. Taking this opportunity, a younger son, Narsimha, usurped the throne and proclaimed himself king. When the news reached his two elder brothers, they hastened back, raised an army and defeated Narsimha, who fled to Bhutan. Malla Deb ascended the throne under the title of Nara Narayan and appointed his brother Sukladhvaj as his Commander-in-Chief.

When Sukladhvaj died, Nara Narayan had a quarrel with the former's son, Raghu Deva. Raghu Deva went away towards the eastern part of his uncle's kingdom. He ruled there as an independent King from his capital Hajo only after the demise of Nara Narayan.

Laksmi Narayan, the son of Nara Narayan did not consolidate the empire. The Mughal invasions had carried the Mughal army towards North Eastern India and in course of time, the Koch Kingdom was turned into a vassal state. Some decades later, the British took over. Over the following years, the British gradually increased their control over the state. After independence, the last ruler of Koch Behar had expressed the intention of casting the lot of his kingdom with the Indian Union. The Instrument of Accession was signed by the Maharaja Jagadipendra Narayan on 12th September 1949. Thereafter, Koch Behar formed a district of the state of West Bengal.

The numismatic history of Koch coin has started from 1477 Saka (1555 AD), when Nara Narayan, the most powerful ruler of the Koch Kingdom, had minted his first coin. Koch coins were generally known as Narayani Mudra. According to local tradition, Narayani coins were in circulation even before Nara Narayan. Coins prior to Nara Narayan, however, are yet to be discovered. The Persian chronicle, Riazus-Salatin, also mentions Narayani coin. As the names of Koch Kings ended with the expression 'Narayan', their coins were known as 'Narayani Mudra'.

In 1603, a treaty was signed by the Koch king Lakshmi Narayan, son of Nara Narayan, with the Mughal Emperor, of whom he was a vassal, confirming that the former would not mint coins worth more than half-a-rupee. This limitation was further enhanced more strongly in 1845 A.D., when the British Government passed an order<sup>2</sup> for the closure of the mint in Cooch Behar.<sup>2</sup> In 1865 A.D., the Britishers also put a stop on the uses of the Narayani coins in the state of Cooch Behar. At that time, the Colonel Haughton submitted a proposal

to the Government proposing the manufacture of Narayani coins with the Maharaja's name on one side and the figure of Queen Victoria on the other, but this was not accepted and from 1866 A.D. British India coins, have been legal tender in the state of Koch Behar.

According to Mr. Stapleton, Nara Narayan's coins were modelled on those of Hussain Shah's Sultani Tanka. There are reasons to believe that Sultani coins were already in circulation in Kamatapur, where the Koch kingdom had been founded. In a few coins issued by Sekendar Shah, as well as Hussain Shah, in 1358 A.D. and 1493 A.D. respectively, the names of 'Kamru' and 'Kamaru' were inscribed. Existence and use of such coins probably influenced the Koch rulers to imitate the sultani coins.

Like Sultani coins, Koch coins are also die-struck, and round in shape, generally of this broad fabric. It has legends on both sides, adhering to the standards of Sultani Tankas.

Again, similar to Sultan and Mughal Tankas, a good variety of signs were found in Narayani Mudra. Many numismatists presume that they are ornamental. But it is difficult to believe that these are simply ornamental. Assamese Buranjis rather confirm that during Nara Narayan's time, signs/symbols were used to identify the mints of the subordinate states to which the coins are related to. Unlike other rulers of this region, it is evident from historical accounts that Nara Narayan, or for that matter, his great general Chilarai (alias Sukladhvaj) evinced great interest about issue of coins. They had placed various restrictions in minting coins by the vassal states. Here, we may discuss these restrictions placed by Nara Narayan and his general during the former's reign.

a) When the Koch army invaded the Jayantia Kingdom, the then Jayantia King was defeated and slain. His son was set up in his place by the Koch general, who imposed a condition that the rulers of Jayantiapur should not put their names on the coins, but should imprint the name of the Kingdom. The numismatic evidences support this information as available in manuscripts like 'Vansavali' of Samudranarayan. Sir Edward Gait and Mr. Stapleton have also agreed that the above information may be accepted as true. This condition was almost literally followed by the subsequent rulers of Jayantiapur. Almost all the coins of Jayantiapur bear the legend of 'Jayantiapur Purandashya' and not the name of the ruler. Although subsequently power and influence of Koch rulers have waned, traditions set up by the ancestorstors have not been changed by the subsequent rulers even upto 1800 A.D.

b) Viryavanta, the chief of the Khairam (Khyrim) state on the Khasi Hills accepted the vassalage of Nara Narayan voluntarily, when Nara Narayan's Army proceeded southward of Assam, and accomplished the conquest of Heramba and Jaintia. According to Sri Edward Gait, a condition was imposed on the Khyrim chief, that his coin should, in future, be struck in the name of Nara Narayana, with a sign as a distinguishing mark from those of the Koch king's own mint. In paragraphs 438 and 439 of Darrang Rajvansavali, it is stated that:

"Khairam badati Maharaja Shuniok |  
 Mohor Maribe prati Agga dio mok ||  
 Heno shuni Sangram Keshori Chilarai |  
 Matibak laila Khairamor Mukh Chai || 438.

Suto Bhaila bari tumi Asi amasar |  
 Mohor Maribe Yaggo Nahai Tomar ||  
 Malldev name tumi Mohor Mariba |  
 Tor Name Maro Jebe Patikar Paiba || 439

Although many scholars have expressed their doubts about the existence of Khyrim coins, information has been collected from many Khasi traditions that the Khasi Syiems (chiefs) had stamped their coins, and had their own mint. Eminent numismatists like Messers. V. Chowdhury and Parimal Roy have also expressed the favourable views in respect of existence of Khyrim coins and actually published a note on a coin of Nara Narayan, with special symbol, akin to Jayantia type of coins and attributed to Khyrim.


c) Dr. A.N. Lahiri, while discussing an unique gold tanka of Nara Narayan, has also drawn attention of the numismatists to a fact that the initial coins of Ananta Manikya do not bear the characteristic Tripura lion, and that was probably because, during that period, Nara Narayan achieved his singular victory over Tripura and the Koch King probably forbade the vanquished Ananta Manikya to put the Tripura lion grotesque on the coins.

Let us now examine the various marks/symbols used in Nara Narayan's coins. Till now, five varieties of signs were noticed in the published Naranarayan's coins. These are:

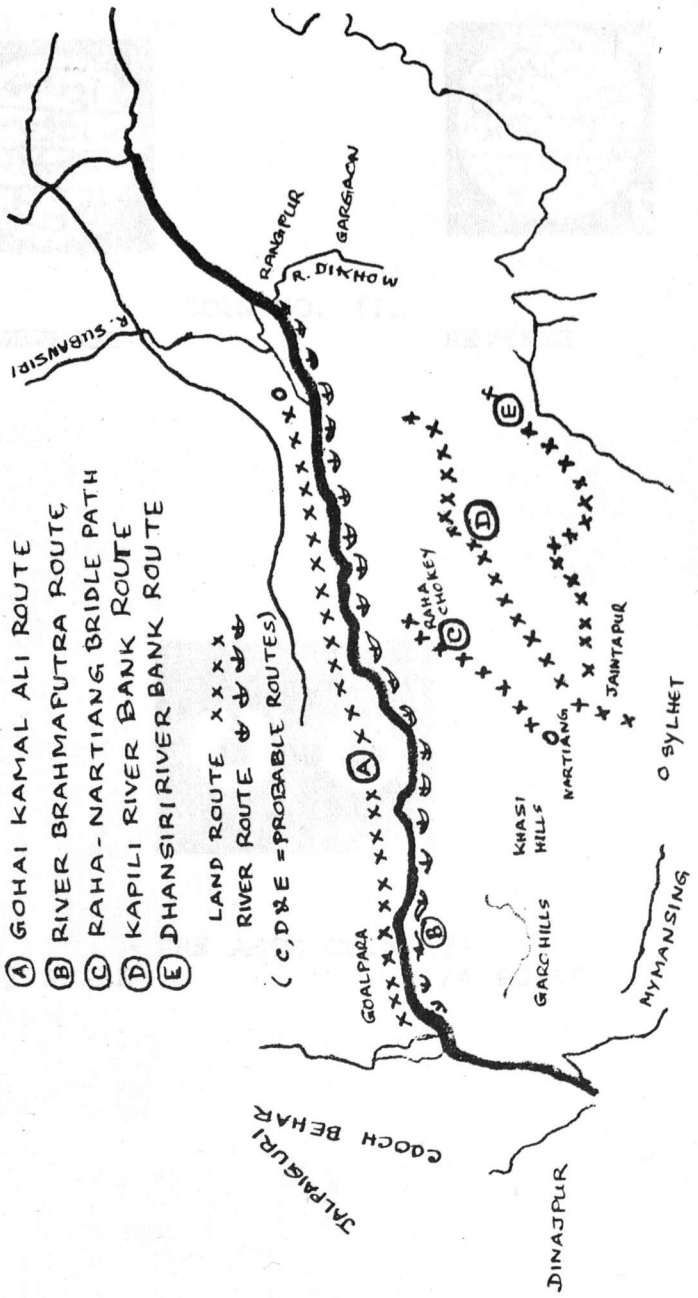
- (i) A dot (o) in the centre of the obverse of the small size silver tanka. It is positioned between the words "Shiva" and "Charana" more towards the base of the gap between the words;

KOCH ARMIES' MARCHING ROUTES

- (A) GOHAI KAMAL ALI ROUTE
- (B) RIVER BRAHMAPUTRA ROUTE
- (C) RAHA - NARTIANG BRIDLE PATH
- (D) KAPILI RIVER BANK ROUTE
- (E) DHANSIRI RIVER BANK ROUTE

LAND ROUTE x x x x  
 RIVER ROUTE 

( C, D & E = PROBABLE ROUTES )



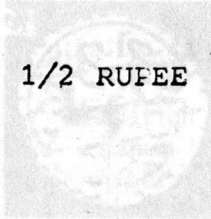
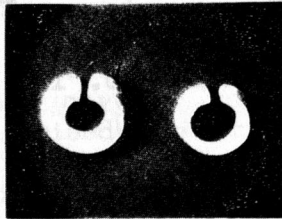


OBVERSE

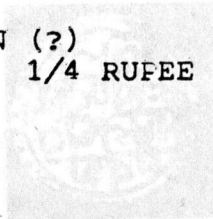


REVERSE

COIN NO. III

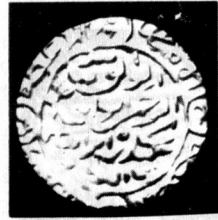


1/2 RUFEE



1/4 RUFEE

PRE AHOM COIN (?)



SULTANI TANKA - SIKANDAR SHAH



OBVERSE

COIN NO. I

REVERSE



OBVERSE

COIN NO. II

REVERSE

- (ii) A multi-pointed star (\*) on the reverse of the small size silver tanka, at the end of the first line where "Sri Sri" has been inscribed;
- (iii) A cross type mark (+), which appears at the end of the fourth line on the obverse of the coin described in (ii), just after the Saka year inscription '1477'. With all probability the sign is of a 'Siva Linga'. In this coin, on the obverse the King has indicated his devotion to Lord Siva. Even now-a-days many of the Koch-Rabhas worship 'Hrishibai', similar to Lord Siva, and use a branch of tree having three sub-branch at its head, representing the 'Jairphak' or trident of Lord Siva.
- (iv) The fourth one, which was seen on a coin published by Sarvashri Vasant Chowdhury & Parimal Ray and preserved in the coin cabinet of the Indian Museum, Calcutta (Serial No. 14584), shows a six pointed star on the obverse of the coin which has been described by writers as "Solomon's Seal". This six pointed star which appears on a number of muslim monuments in India, is nothing but the symbolic representation of the six seasons, which the Hindu craftsmen freely used to embellish gateways and arches since ancient times.
- (v) In addition to the six pointed star, in the same coin, an ornament of dots in the upper margin with two vertical strokes were also noticed.

But recently, we have come across a few of Nara Narayan's silver coins, provenance of which is Madgharia village near Guwahati. This has thrown a new light on Koch coins, specially that on Nara Narayan's Mudra.

The details of these Nara Narayan's coins which bear different symbols from those of the known coins, are given below:

### Coin No. I

Metal - silver, Size - round, 31 mm in diameter, weight 10.05 gms, legend - sanskrit, script - Assamese/old Bengali, Numerical figure Maithili type, Denomination - Tanka, Date - Saka 1477.

Obverse: Double line circle with dots between and a symbol of a bracketed dot near the alphabet of 'dhu' in the third line of the legend:

1. Sri Sri
2. Siva Charana
3. Kamala Madhu
4. Karasya

Reverse: Double circle with dots between; a multi-pointed star symbol after the words "Sri Sri", horizontal line above date and cross type mark after the date and four line legend:

1. Sri Sri
2. Mana naranara
3. Yanshya Saka
4. 1477

Here, thus, we have noticed a new type of Naranarayan's coin bearing two marks; multi-pointed star and a prominent bracket on the right hand side of the obverse of the coin, which has never been noticed earlier.

### Coin No. II

Metal - silver; Size - round; 32 mm in

diameter, Weight 10.16 gms, Legend - Sanskrit, Script - Assamese/Old Bengali, Numerical figure - Maithili type, Denomination - Tanka, Date - Saka 1477.

The second coin is stylistically similar to the coin No. I and the legends on obverse and reverse are also same. But this coin bears an interesting symbol, which is quite new in design ever noticed by us earlier. It looks like a spearhead. There is no other sign whatsoever in this coin. Again, unlike other Narayani coins, the style of writing the symbol of 'four' is different. It forms the shape of laterally inverted 'S'. This is similar to the writing on a coin published by Sarvasri V. Chowdhury and P. Roy, and which has been classified by them as 'Jaintia Type'.

### Coin No. III

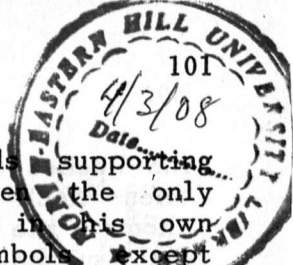
Metal - Silver, Size - round, 31 mm in diameter, Weight 10.11 gms, Legend - Sanskrit, Script - Assamese/old Bengali, Numerical figure - Maithili type, Denomination - Tanka, Date - Saka 1477. Legend as mentioned against coin No. I.

This coin is also similar to other Nara Narayan's coins, except that the die as well as the symbol varies. While the reverse of this coin bears the symbols of multi-pointed star and Siva linga, this coin also has an additional pointed star on the obverse, after the words "Sri Sri" in the first line.

Now, the question arises as to why these symbols were used, and whether these are not mere symbols, but mint marks. As we have already seen, Nara Narayan and his general Chilarai imposed several restrictions on issuing of coins, including putting of mint mark on

the coins, to differentiate them from being made in Nara Narayan's mints. Therefore, we have stable reason to believe that these coins bearing different symbols from Koch coins were minted by subordinate rulers. Considering the place where these coins have been found, and the inscriptions thereon, it appears that these coins were minted either by Raghudeva of Eastern Koch Kingdom or by a Khyrim ruler of Khasi Hills. These two aspects may be now considered by us. We may also examine the possibility of issuing such coins by any governor(s) of Nara Narayan. But we have no historical information about appointment of any regional governor by the Koch King to rule or administer the newly conquered territory in this region. Hence, we may concentrate on the first two possibilities. The provenance of these coins is a sub-urban village of Guwahati, an important trade centre since the last few centuries. The name 'Guwahati' itself indicates that it is a place for trading activities. Betelnut, which was scarce in the hills, but a commodity of daily use there was available in abundance at this centre, which was called by the Khasis as "Kowai-hati" or betelnut market. Kowai-hati has since been transformed to Guwahati.<sup>10</sup> It is also known to us that Raghudeva's seat at Hajo was also not far from Guwahati. Can we assume that Raghudeva who in 1581 AD had set himself up as the ruler of the eastern part of the Koch Kingdom, initially under the suzerainty of his uncle Nara Narayan, had minted these coins? Raghudev had minted coins on his own in 1588 A.D., only after the death of his uncle, when he became an independent ruler.<sup>11</sup> Between 1581 A.D. and 1587 A.D. he was definitely in need of coins to meet his requisites and it may not be convenient for him to bring coins from the Koch capital in the western part, specially when his relation with Nara Narayan was also under some strain. Was there any mint at Hajo?

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Since there are no authentic records supporting the above views, and specially where the only available coin minted by Raghudeva in his own name/mint does not bear such symbols except the Siva Linga Type of cross at the bottom of the obverse of the coin, we cannot draw any conclusion that all these newly discovered coins were issued by Raghudeva except the coin under item I and III. If the coin No. I and III were minted at Hajo then these would be regarded as the first coins of Raghudeva. However, the only evidence to support this view is the presence of 'Siva linga' mark on Coin Nos. I & III.

The next probability is that all these coins with special symbols may have been issued by the Khyrim rulers of the Khasi Hills. We have already seen that one of the stipulations made by Chilarai on Vijjavanta's submission to Nara Narayan was that he should use a sign of a mace to differentiate Khyrim coins with those of Nara Narayan's mint. In this connection, it has also been mentioned in 'Darang Rajvansavali' that originally, Vijjavanta's request to mint coins in his name was turned down. But at the intervention of queen Bhanumati, Vijjavanta was allowed to mint coins in the name of Nara Narayan.<sup>12</sup>

While examining the claim of Sarvasri V. Choudhury and P. Roy that the Nara Narayana's coins which are preserved in the National Museum having striking similarity of the style and fabric with the Jayantipur coins might be issued by Khyrim ruler, Dr. A.N. Lahiri opined that since no coins of Khyrim are so far known, it is difficult to believe that the relative unique coin was issued from Khyrim. But we cannot just ignore the historical information about Vijjavanta and the restrictions imposed by

the Koches on minting of coins. With all probability, when Koch army invaded this region, like the Ahoms, the Khyrim were also not minting coins, but subsequently they had to do so specially for payment of the yearly tributes to the Koch king which was fixed at <sup>13</sup>fifteen thousand rupees along with gold mohars etc.

Here it would not be out of place to mention that two pairs of silver made ear ring shaped items were also found along with the above reported Koch coins. These rings were individually of 2.70 gms and 5.35 gms each in weight and equivalent to quarter and half silver tankas. We have already mentioned that during this time, the Ahoms did not have any coins. It is also known that various articles were used as a medium of exchange in Assam during the material period. Shri N.K. Basu, in his book "Assam in the Ahom Age" (page 120), stated that round balls of equal weights and values with gold and silver coins were also used during that period.<sup>14</sup> The uniformity in sizes and weights of these silver rings and hoarding of those with metallic coins lead us to believe that these ear-rings were the medium of exchange in Assam. Since the Khyrim had a large scale border trade with the Ahoms, probably, they had also used precious metals as medium of exchange, till they had minted coins in the name of Nara Narayan.

The following facts have further strengthened our views about the existence of Khyrim coins:

- a) The provenance of the newly discovered coins is very near the then Khyrim kingdom.
- b) Coins bearing such symbols, if issued by Nara Narayan, would have been noticed earlier within the geographical area of the erstwhile Koch Kingdom.

- c) These coins, along with the coin published by Sarvasri V. Choudhury and P. Roy, are stylistically similar to those of Jaintia coins. Since the Khyrim kingdom was bordering Jaintia, it would not be too far fetched to presume that the Khyrim rulers might have taken the help or guidance of the Jaintia artists to design the dice of their coins.
- d) The oldest Jaintia coin so far discovered was issued by Pratap Rai in the year Saka 1502 (1580 A.D.), i.e., only 16/17 years after the military invasion of the Koches, and the Jaintias followed the stipulations made by Nara Narayan in respect of minting of Jaintia coins since then. Similarly, the Khyrim rulers may have started minting their coins ( in the name of Nara Narayan) only after the invasion of Nara Narayan.
- e) The power and size of the Khyrim kingdom dwindled within a short time. By 1704 A.D. they had to seek protection from Ahom king against the oppressions of the neighbouring Khasi States. This may resulted stoppage of minting subsequent coins.

Before coming to final conclusion, it would be prudent to discuss about the Khyrim State and its historical background. We are also to examine whether they had adequate trading activities which needed the use of currency, or they had power and influence as well as sovereignty that could have lead to striking coins as an expression of their independence.

In ancient times, in accordance with local traditions, the whole of Khasi and Jaintia Hills formed one kingdom, which was subsequently

split into two kingdoms, namely Khyrim and Jaintia. Subsequently, Khasi Hills was split into a number of small native states under chieftains, sixteen of such units still exist under Syiemship. Syiems are still the heads of their respective areas. Names of the existing Syiemships are Khyrim, Mylliem, Nongkhlaw, Cherra, Rambrai, Myriaw, Nongstoin, Nobosohphoh, Mawiang, Nongspung, Mawsynram, Maharam, Malaisohmat, Langrin, Bhowal and Jirang.

The Khasi tradition says that the oldest syiems of Khyrim state were U Narain, U Sangmein, U Santab, U Ksan Singh, U Mit, U Piar, U Ksan, U Bor Manik, and U Shan Rai. These syiems had an electoral assembly, which represented delegates from important clans and village headmen. Although these chiefs used to rule in a democratic manner, Khyrim rulers used to rule like a king due to the size of their kingdom. The state<sup>15</sup> extended to the plains of Kamrup to Sylhet, till its power receded and split up into smaller units. Khyrim is still one of the Khasi states, ruled by a syiem.

Lt. Col. Allan Wilson, in his article "Sports and Service in Assam and Elsewhere", which was published in 1924, had mentioned that in ancient times, the Khasis were a much more powerful people, and their customs were endorsed on or were copied by neighbouring tribes. There is some reason for believing that the Khasis had sent an embassy to China, sometime in the 16th century, for it is on record that an embassy had gone to Peking from Assam, headed by a man named U. Ai, which is a Khasi name. In 1912, a small metal slab was obtained in Nowgong district, which adjoins the North side of the then Khasi states (Khyrim and Dimarua) and the slab in question looks like a Chinese credential.<sup>16</sup>

The earliest recorded history of Khyrim is available from Koch accounts, specially from the Darang Rajvansavali, covering the period of Nara Narayan's invasion to the north east states, including Khyrim. From the source book "Asom Burunji", based on ancient manuscripts, we have come to know about Ahom-Khyrim relations during the reign of Sargadeva Rudra Sinha and Gowrinath Simha (1696-1714 A.D.) and (1780-1795 A.D.) respectively. It is interesting that whatever stated in the Koch and the Ahom records have similarity with the oral traditions called "Ki Parom" of the Khasi people, throwing light on the history of the Khasis which rolled through several generations. There are some differences in details with recorded history, of course.

The Britishers who came into contact with the Khasis, just within 269 years approximately after Nara Narayan's invasion of Assam, had recorded that the ruler of the country of Khyrim was one of the most powerful mountain chiefs. Circumstances enabled the Khyrim ruler to exercise an authority, by far more despotic, than what was enjoyed by most of the Cossyah Rajahs.<sup>18</sup> We remember that by the 19th century, the powers of the Khyrim ruler had waned to a larger extent, but it appears that still he was recognised by the Britishers as a powerful ruler. It appears from the Articles of Agreement between the East India Company and U Bur Manick, in his capacity as 'Raja of Khyrim' (which was executed by the Raja on the 15th day of January, 1830, corresponding with the 4th of Magh, 1236 B.S.) that still during that period, the Khyrim ruler was holding a vast territory in Khasi and Jaintia Hills. In accordance with this agreement, he ceded the lands on the south and east of the Oomeeam river, and relinquished his former claim regarding the boundary of Desh Dimarua and also agreed to

the proposal of Afdee Nuddee being the future boundary. He was, however, allowed to enjoy the land near the Sonapur market for the purpose of trade.<sup>19</sup>

Hence, a Rajah, whose kingdom survived for such a long period, must have all the paraphanelia of a sovereign ruler, including minting of coins, like those of the neighbouring Ahom, Jaintia, and Kachar Kingdoms.

From the chronicles of Ahoms, it appears that the Khyrim ruler was called a Rajah by the plains people, and the Ahom Government had relations with the state of Khyrim, which were of commercial nature. The state of Khyrim also obtained legal permission from the Ahom Government to trade with the plains and establish markets there.<sup>20</sup> Reasonably, we can believe that Khyrim Khasis, who had trade relations with plains, were in need of some kind of currency for their large scale trading activities, rather than fully depending on the barter system.

The headquarters of the Khyrim state was first established at Nongkseh. This place was known for its adept blacksmiths, iron-smelting houses, and jewellers. Hence it was definitely not difficult for them to acquire the art of minting metallic coins.

There were tributary syiems, who owed allegiance to the Khyrim syiem. The paramount ruler of Khyrim used to visit the states of the tributary syiems once a year. The said units are still under Khyrim syiemship. A map drawn as late as 1835 shows that the territorial jurisdiction of the Khyrim rulers through the subsidiary states touched the border of the modern Kamrup district of Assam, and the distance of the village where the coins (as narrated

under items I to III) were found, is just a few kilometres from boundaries of the Khasi state.

A few scholars have doubted the submission of the Khyrim ruler to Nara Narayan, as mentioned in the 'Darang Rajvansavali'. Their doubt is based on the inconsistency in contemporary records. There is no record regarding the place of engagement between the Khyrim and the Koch army, and whether the Koch forces really penetrated into the heart of the Khyrim kingdom, which was remote, and extremely difficult for its terrains those days. But if we examine the route followed by the Koch army led by Chila Rai, it appears that Khyrim was not far away from their marching route. During 1563 A.D., when Nara Narayan and Chila Rai advanced towards Ahom Kingdom for a second time, they first encamped near the mouth of the Dikhow river. From the base they began to conquer the surrounding Kingdoms. First they defeated the Ahoms convincingly and then turned towards the Kachari kingdom. The next victim was the king of Manipur, followed by the King of Jaintia, then invaded Tripura. On way back to Assam the Koch army met the Rajah of Khyrim. Nara Narayan accepted his submission. The Koches then attacked Dimurua. If the Koch army could invade Jaintia and Dimurua which are accepted historical facts, then there should be no reason to doubt that it was not possible for the Koch King to meet Khyrim ruler, whose kingdom was flanked by Jaintia and Dumurua.<sup>21</sup> Sir Edward Gait, however, had not brushed aside this recorded historical information. According to him, as there are some grounds for believing that Nara Narayan defeated the Kacharis and Jaintias, there seems no reason to doubt that Nara Narayan obtained the voluntary submission

of the chief of Khyrim.<sup>22</sup> But more logical argument can be that as the Khyrim kingdom had trade interest in Ahom territories, the Khyrim ruler thought it prudent to come for some understanding with the Koch ruler, so that the trade relation with plains may not get a setback. The prosperous trade relations between the Ahoms and Khyrim during the subsequent period of Rudra Simha (1696-1714 A.D.) had been narrated in Ahom Burunjis. A Trader named Santosh Bangal fled from Pandua in Sylhet and took refuge in Dimurua. The state of Dimurua was bordering Jaintia, Khyrim and Ahom Kingdom. To build up trade connection with Ahom markets, Santosh Bangal requested the ruler of Dimurua to hand him over to one Kina Barua, a merchant of Khyrim, so that he can begin his trade in Assam markets from Khyrim under the patronage of Kina Barua. The Rajah of Dimarua did accordingly and within a short time Santosh Bangal became rich and prosperous through his trade.<sup>23</sup> This indicate the lucrative trading activity of Khyrim with Assam. Even during the period of Ahom King Gaurinath Simha (1780-90 A.D.) an embassy from Khyrim visited Guwahati. Sole purpose was to maintain the economic advantage which the Khyrim subjects derived from commercial relations with the markets in Assam.<sup>24</sup>

The various old deeds recorded at the Deputy Commissioner's Record Room at Shillong are in Assamese, obsolete Bengali and Persian scripts. The records show that the Khasi rulers were acquainted with these languages despite they had a complete separate language for them. It also appears that Khyrim Syiems used Assamese as well as old Bengali in their written records. As such it was quite natural that in their coins they used Assamese/old Bengali scripts. It was all the more necessary for them to use a script which was understandable to the traders

in plains both in Assam and Bengal bordering Khyrim state.

A critical analysis of the seals used by the Khyrim rulers in Pre-British period shows that they are alike the seals of the sovereign rulers in neighbourhood and the seals bear the symbol of multi-pointed star which we have noticed on the newly discovered coins. Although these seals have been made long after the invasion of Nara Narayan, there is no reason why all of a sudden the mark in question would be adopted by them, as Khyrim was never conquered by any of the non-Khasi rulers till the advent of Britishers.

Now, if we accept that the above Narayani coins were issued by the Khyrim ruler Vijyavanta, let us try to find out his real identity. We know that due to increasing influence of the Brahmins over the courts of the various tribal rulers in the North Eastern Region, such as Ahoms, Tripuri, Kachari and Jaintias, these rulers had adopted a name or title in Hindu style, understandable to their subjects in the plains. The name 'Vijyavanta' also indicates, as viewed by E. Gait, influence of Brahman priests,<sup>25</sup> considering the period when Koch army invaded this part we may identify Vijyavanta with Santab<sup>26</sup> alias Santa, 3rd on the Khyrim rulers' list. All environmental<sup>27</sup> as well as recorded historical evidences now indicate that the coin in the name of Nara Narayan with a symbol of spear-head, if not all the newly discovered coins, were issued by Vijyavanta alias U Santab of Khyrim.

#### Notes & References

1. E.A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, 1962, p.42.
2. *Cooch Behar Select Records*, Vol. II, p."123.

3. **Cooch Behar State and its Land Revenue Settlement**, p.416.
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27. We are indebted to the State Museum, Department of Assam Secretariat Records and the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Assam, Government of Assam, Guwahati, for allowing us to examine the coins of, manuscripts and publications about the relevant period which are preserved/recorded with them.