



## Rise of Ahom kingdom: An Analytical Study of Siu-ka-pha's Political and Diplomatic Skills

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### ABSTRACT

Every country needs a proper ruling and administrative system which leads the territory to stability, efficiency and growth. In ancient and medieval period, powerful states always found ways to maintain a stable ruling system for which they followed various means. The Ahom kingdom, one of the most successful dynasties of India, established by Siu-Ka-Pha, ruled for almost 600 years (1228-1826) in present day Assam, while they belonged to Shan branch of Tai group of Southeast Asia, more precisely in present-day China. This paper is a descriptive analysis to study the political and diplomatic strategies of Siu-Ka-Pha as a founding ruler of the Ahom kingdom.

### Keywords:

Ruling system, Ahoms, dynasty, diplomacy.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Ahom kingdom created history by ruling over Assam for the longest period of time. They united every small kingdoms of the land and made Greater Assam. This is a result of their good administrative system, organized society, friendly attitude, patriotism, good diplomatic strategies, as well as the rulers' individual personalities. One of such Ahom kings was the founder of the kingdom Chao Lung Siu-Ka-Pha (Sukapha), who had an incredible personality and political expertise.

In the thirteenth century, a group of people entered into the Brahmaputra valley with their leader Siu-Ka-Pha . They were the ancestors of Ahoms and belonged to the Tai community. Siu-ka-pha's birth history is still debatable, but according to records and history, he was born to Chao- Chang- Nyeu and Nang Mong- Blak- Kham- Sen in the Tai state of Mong (present day Yunan province, China). Siu-Ka-Pha was first nominated as a prince for Mong Mao which was then ruled by Pao-Meo-Pung, as Pao-Meo-Pung had no male heir. But after a long period, a son had born to Pao- Meo-Pung's wife and that ended Su-ka-pha's journey as a prince of Mong Mao.

Siu-Ka-Pha left Mong Mao in 1215 with eight nobles, nine thousand cavalry and two elephants. Before crossing Patkai hills, he stepped into the Naga valley where Siu-Ka-Pha came into conflict with the Nagas. On his way to the Brahmaputra valley, he crossed several areas and finally by crossing Patkai hill he reached his destination. Siu-Ka-Pha took the land road from China to India through Yamuna, from the upper Burma area.

Before Siu-Ka-Pha, one of his cousins Samlungfa came to Assam about ten to twelve years back and he occupied the territories from Tripura to Khasi hill. Samlungfa also



propounded some posts of ministers in the region and people of this region paid tax to Samlungfa in the state of Moalung. When Siu-ka-pha came to Assam people paid tax to Siu-Ka-Pha. Siu-Ka-Pha was helped by a Naga minister, who was one of those ministers posted by Samlungfa to establish Ahom kingdom. The Naga minister was given the title of "bimun pator", which means old helping minister. When Siu-Ka-Pha started his rule in Assam, he was welcomed by the Borahi king and the Moran king as they trusted his leadership quality. The science of cultivation which was brought by Siu-Ka-Pha was also sufficient enough to convert the infertile land to a fecund agricultural territory. Siu-Ka-Pha cleaned the territory, taught local people to cultivate new forms of rice and also taught them how to preserve foods.

### **IN SEARCH OF CAPITAL**

Over the next few years, Siu-Ka-Pha kept moving to find out an appropriate place to establish his capital. In 1230, when he reached Tipam he saw a beautiful land but Siu-Ka-Pha bridged Sessa river but finding the area not suitable he started his journey and he reached Abhoypur and stayed upto 1238. In Abhoypur, he did not stay for a long period and moved to Habung (in present day Dhemaji district) but because of heavy flood in the area he did not consider the area appropriate for his capital and moved in 1241. After searching many places Siu-Ka-Pha finally established his capital at Charaideo in 1251. Charaideo was a small hill and was above the plain land. Despite this, Siu-Ka-Pha selected Charaideo as his capital because of its importance from a point of view, thereby making it the first capital of Ahom kingdom. Geographical location of the capital, therefore, is very important for the proper administration and growth of a kingdom. Siu-Ka-Pha was well aware of this fact, so his long-term vision was to find the appropriate place to establish the capital of his kingdom. The long term perspective of Siu-Ka-Pha depicts a good ruler's mindset before establishing his dynasty. Siu-Ka-Pha's



vision certainly was one of the factors responsible for the success of the Ahom kingdom in Assam.

### **MAINTENANCE OF DIPLOMATIC RELATION**

As an outsider from China, Siu-Ka-Pha had to mitigate the cultural, linguistic and other traditional barrier. However, Siu-Ka-Pha did not find it difficult because of his attitude and mindset. He was able to adapt and thereby maintain cooperation with other local people. Siu-Ka-Pha focused more on cooperation rather than aggression. In terms of diplomacy his strategy is highly appreciable for a long-term success.

Siu-Ka-Pha conquered most of the areas governed by the Chutias, Kacharis, Morans, Borahis, etc. The Borahi and Moran kings were in friendly terms with Siu-Ka-Pha. They helped the new king of the region in every possible way, since Siu-Ka-Pha helped in the growth of the region with science and other tactics which he brought with him. Siu-Ka-Pha taught them how about scientific techniques of production and the proper process of cultivation.

Apart from aggression and cooperation, one of the strategies in Ahom kingdom was matrimonial alliances, where Ahom women were used as political tools to maintain diplomatic relations and to expand and defend their territories. Even Siu-Ka-Pha married women from other local tribes such as daughters of Badaucha, the Moran chief and Thakumatha, the chief of Borahi tribe, which had significant contributions to their assimilation with the local tribes at the beginning and to the purpose of the formulation of the Ahom kingdom. In the period of the Ahoms, polygamy was another reason which gave Ahom kings the opportunity to maintain a cordial relation with a large group of people. He encouraged his soldiers and other people to marry local people which will help them establish cordial relation with local people.



## **ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM**

Siu-Ka-Pha created two important posts of ministers, Buragohain and Borgohain, in his administration and they were from some specific families and appointment of Gohains were hereditary. Siu-Ka-Pha prepared his council with people who are loyal to their king, to the territory and to their duty, because he understood that a good administrative system is pivotal to a great dynasty. The Ahom kingdom is also famous for military intelligence and battle prowess, which led to them winning several wars and conflicts.

## **PAIK SYSTEM IN AHOM SOCIETY**

A good administrative system leads to growth, prosperity and stability of a country. The Ahom kingdom was not an exception. The organizational structure of Ahom rule was based on Paik system. Siu-Ka-Pha introduced the Paik system of exacting personal services from the members of the tribal communities who were to serve the ruling tribe as fuel suppliers, water drawers, honey suppliers etc. But the Paik system was systematically implemented by Momai Tamuli Baruah under Pratap Singh (Mohan, 2017). The Paiks consisted of adult males who were willing to render their services for the welfare of the state.

## **SIU-KA-PHA AS A RULER**

The founding father of the Ahom kingdom, Siu-Ka-Pha, had an incredible personality. He was courageous, highly ambitious, humane and firm, which helped him establish the biggest kingdom of the Assam valley. His attitude towards local communities was respected by the communities. He borrowed both cooperative and aggressive attitude according to the situation which helped him establish "Greater Assam". Siu-Ka-Pha can also be considered as a philosopher. He had his own ideology and he tried to establish



his ideology through his Ahom kingdom. Siu-Ka-Pha assimilated himself among the tribal people and adopted their language, culture, religion, life style, while also practicing his own traditions and beliefs he brought with him. The strategies of assimilation and blending in, formation of his ministers, deliberation of duty to ministers, show his visionary mindset and dynamic planning strategy for his capital, which led to the rule of the Ahom dynasty for over six hundred years.

### **CONCLUSION**

The prestige of the ahom kingdom was not only the contribution of Siu-Ka-Pha. There were almost thirty kings who ruled after him. Each king had his own contribution to the kingdom. There were many ups and downs to the kingdom, but they were able to maintain and protect their land from every attempt of invasion for 598 years. Ahom kingdom is not just a part of history books of Assam. The dynasty has a lot of dimensions to learn: administration, kingship, leadership quality, intelligence, military, etc.

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